



US 20090145737A1

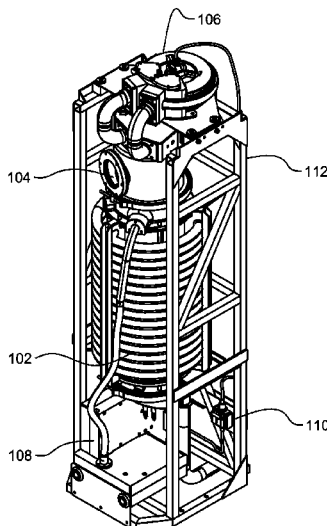
(19) **United States**(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Kamen et al.(10) **Pub. No.: US 2009/0145737 A1**(43) **Pub. Date: Jun. 11, 2009**(54) **WATER VAPOR DISTILLATION APPARATUS,
METHOD AND SYSTEM**(75) Inventors: **Dean Kamen**, Bedford, MA (US);
Christopher C. Langenfeld,
Nashua, NH (US); **Stanley B.
Smith, III**, Raymond, NH (US);
Prashant Bhat, Manchester, NH
(US); **Ryan LaRocque**, Pepperell,
MA (US); **Andrew A.
Schnellinger**, Merrimack, NH
(US); **Otis L. Clapp**, Epping, NH
(US)

Correspondence Address:

Michelle Saquet Temple**DEKA Research & Development Corporation, 340
Commercial Street
Manchester, NH 03101-1129 (US)**(73) Assignee: **DEKA Products Limited
Partnership**, Manchester, NH (US)(21) Appl. No.: **12/135,035**(22) Filed: **Jun. 6, 2008****Related U.S. Application Data**(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 11/480,294,
filed on Jun. 30, 2006, which is a continuation-in-part
of application No. 10/713,617, filed on Nov. 13, 2003,
Continuation-in-part of application No. 11/168,239,
filed on Jun. 28, 2005, now Pat. No. 7,488,158, which
is a continuation-in-part of application No. 10/720,
802, filed on Nov. 24, 2003, now abandoned, which is
a continuation-in-part of application No. 10/713,617,
filed on Nov. 13, 2003, Continuation-in-part of appli-
cation No. 10/713,591, filed on Nov. 13, 2003, now
Pat. No. 7,465,375, Continuation-in-part of applica-
tion No. 10/713,617, filed on Nov. 13, 2003.(60) Provisional application No. 60/518,782, filed on Nov.
10, 2003, provisional application No. 60/490,615,
filed on Jul. 28, 2003, provisional application No.
60/425,820, filed on Nov. 13, 2002, provisional appli-
cation No. 60/518,782, filed on Nov. 10, 2003, provi-
sional application No. 60/490,615, filed on Jul. 28,
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Nov. 13, 2002, provisional application No. 60/490,
615, filed on Jul. 28, 2003, provisional application No.
60/425,820, filed on Nov. 13, 2002, provisional appli-
cation No. 60/518,782, filed on Nov. 10, 2003, provi-
sional application No. 60/490,615, filed on Jul. 28,
2003, provisional application No. 60/425,820, filed on
Nov. 13, 2002, provisional application No. 60/933,
525, filed on Jun. 7, 2007.**Publication Classification**(51) **Int. Cl.**
B01D 5/00 (2006.01)(52) **U.S. Cl.** **202/185.1**(57) **ABSTRACT**

A fluid vapor distillation apparatus. The apparatus includes a source fluid input, and an evaporator condenser apparatus. The evaporator condenser apparatus includes a substantially cylindrical housing and a plurality of tubes in the housing. The source fluid input is fluidly connected to the evaporator condenser and the evaporator condenser transforms source fluid into steam and transforms compressed steam into product fluid. Also included in the fluid vapor distillation apparatus is a heat exchanger fluidly connected to the source fluid input and a product fluid output. The heat exchanger includes an outer tube and at least one inner tube. Also included in the fluid vapor distillation apparatus is a regenerative blower fluidly connected to the evaporator condenser. The regenerative blower compresses steam, and the compressed steam flows to the evaporative condenser where compressed steam is transformed into product fluid.

100



100

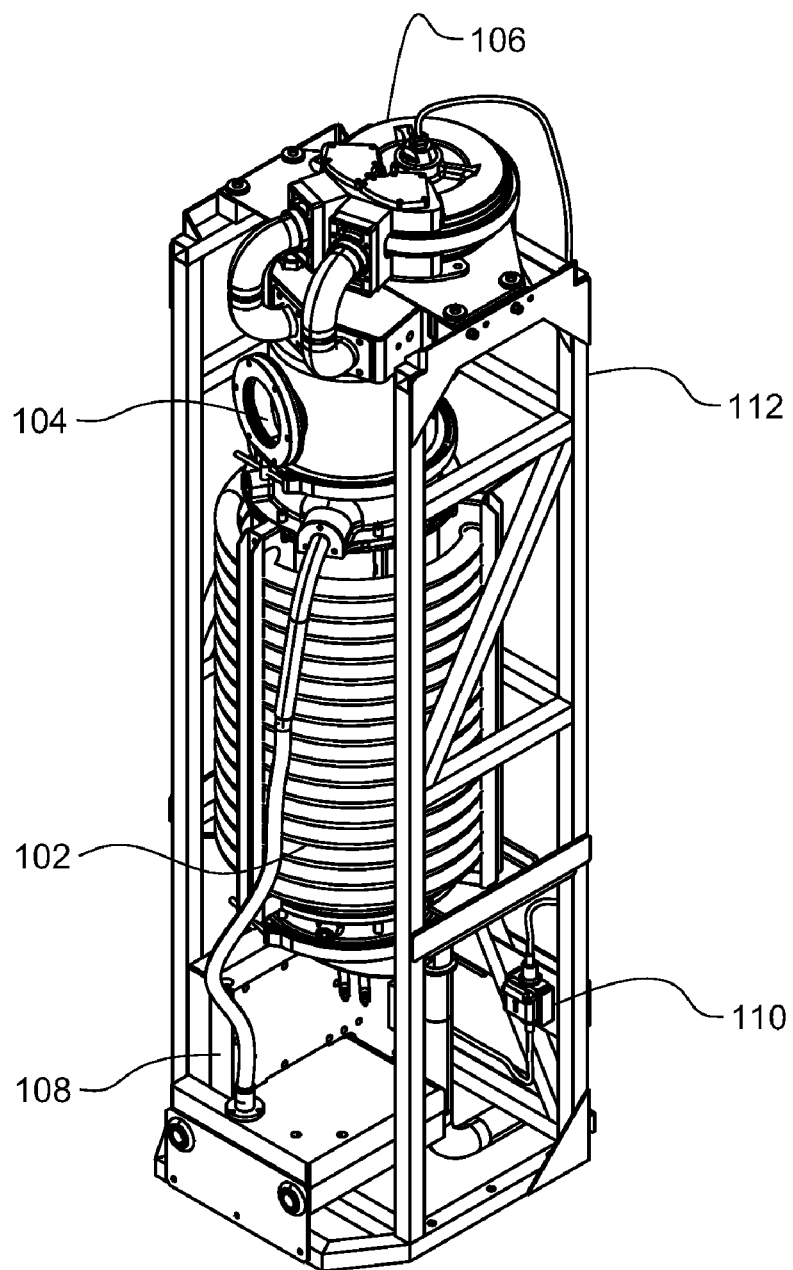


FIG.1

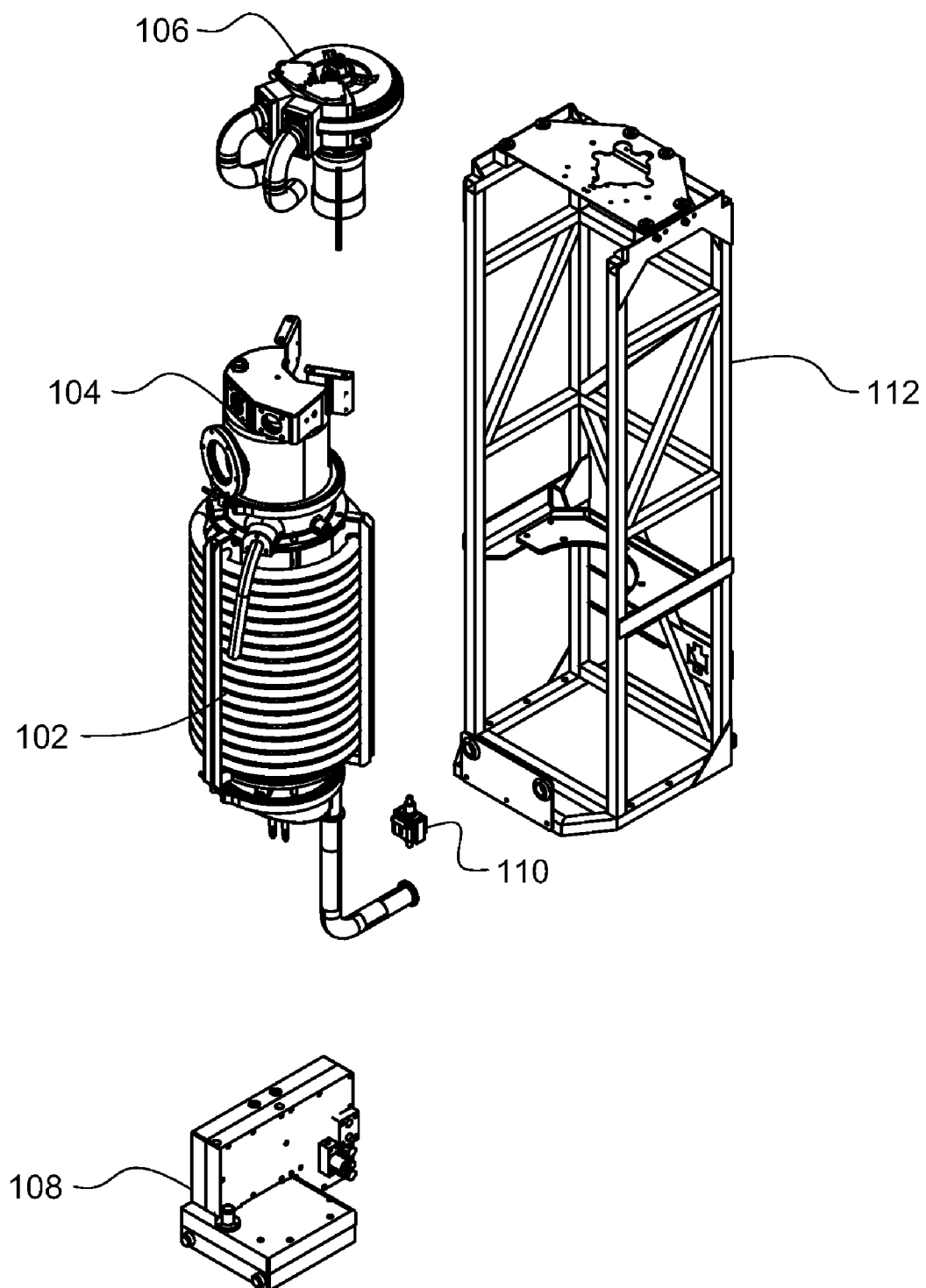


FIG.1A

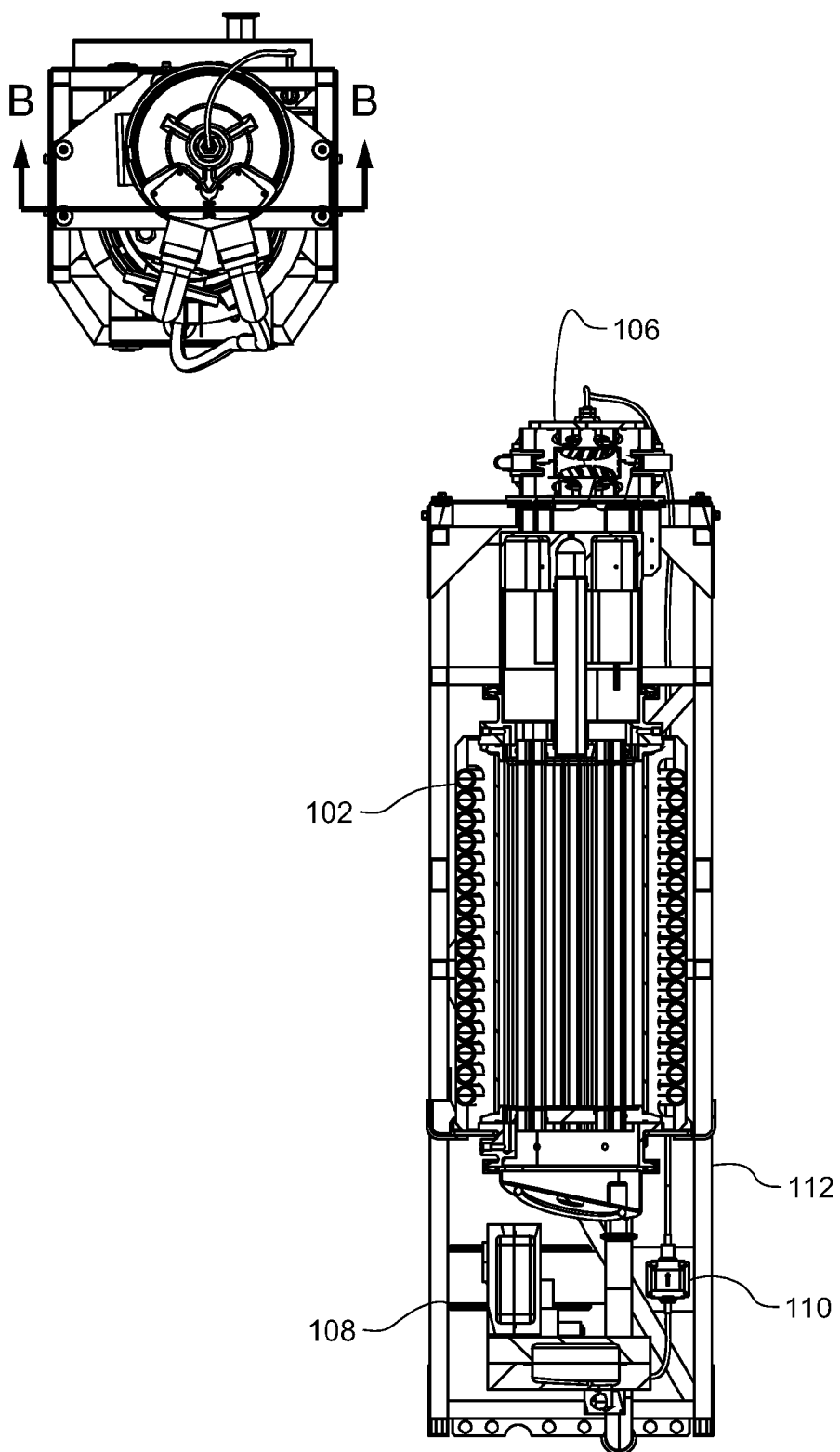


FIG.1B

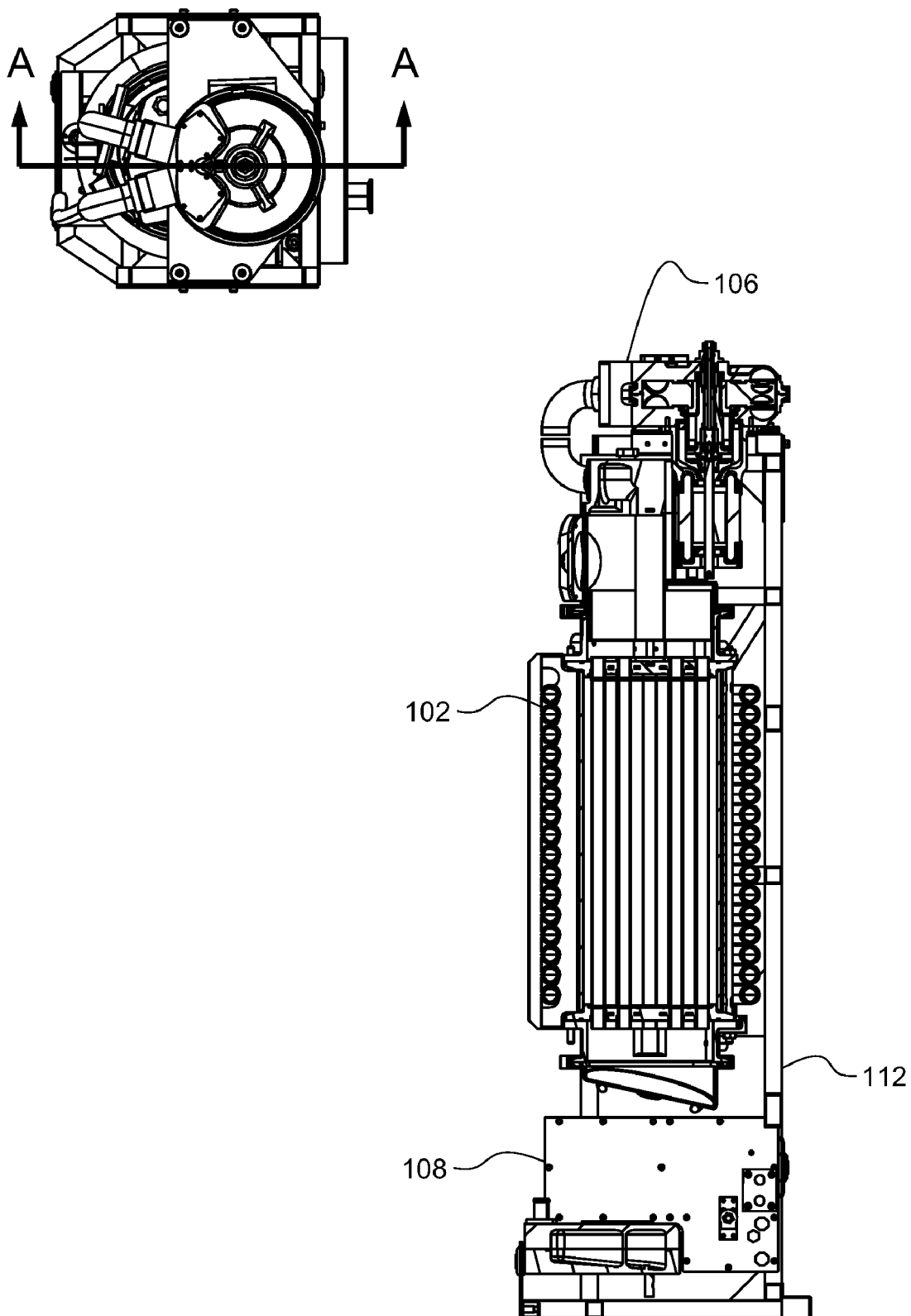


FIG.1C

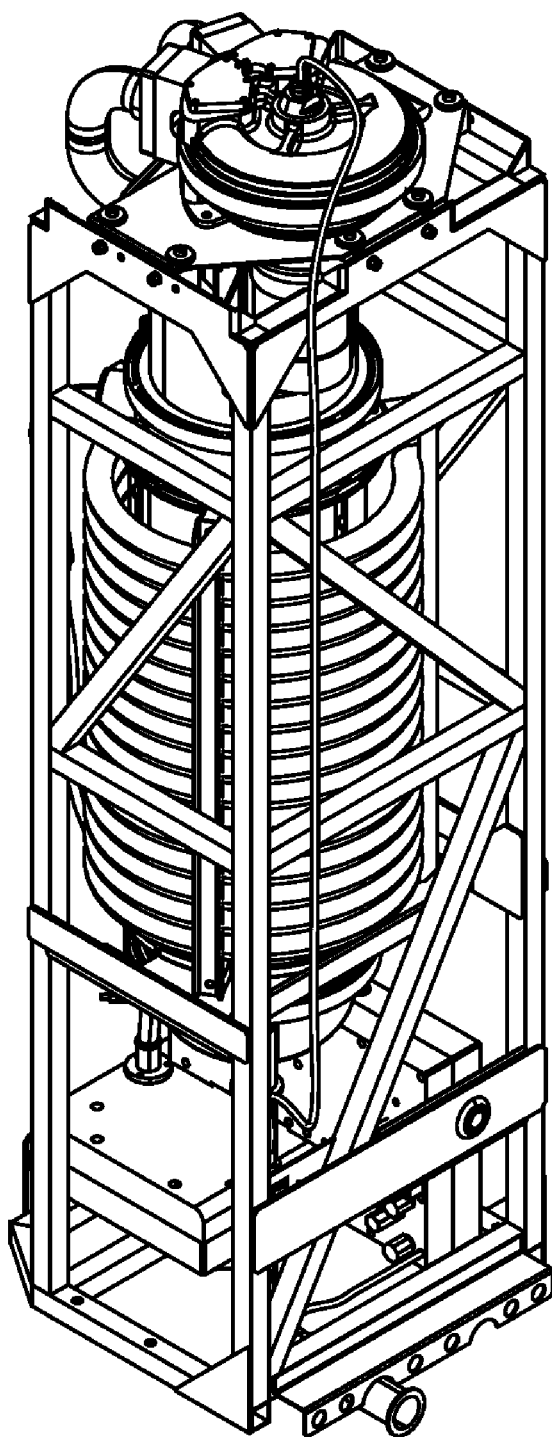


FIG.1D

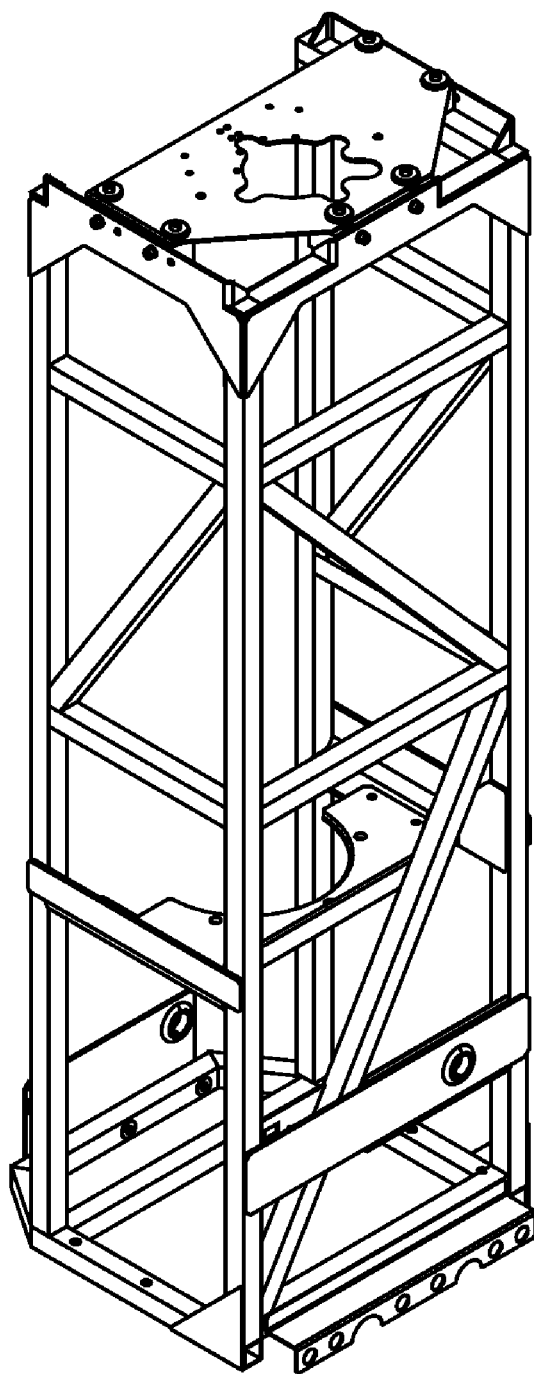


FIG.1E

120

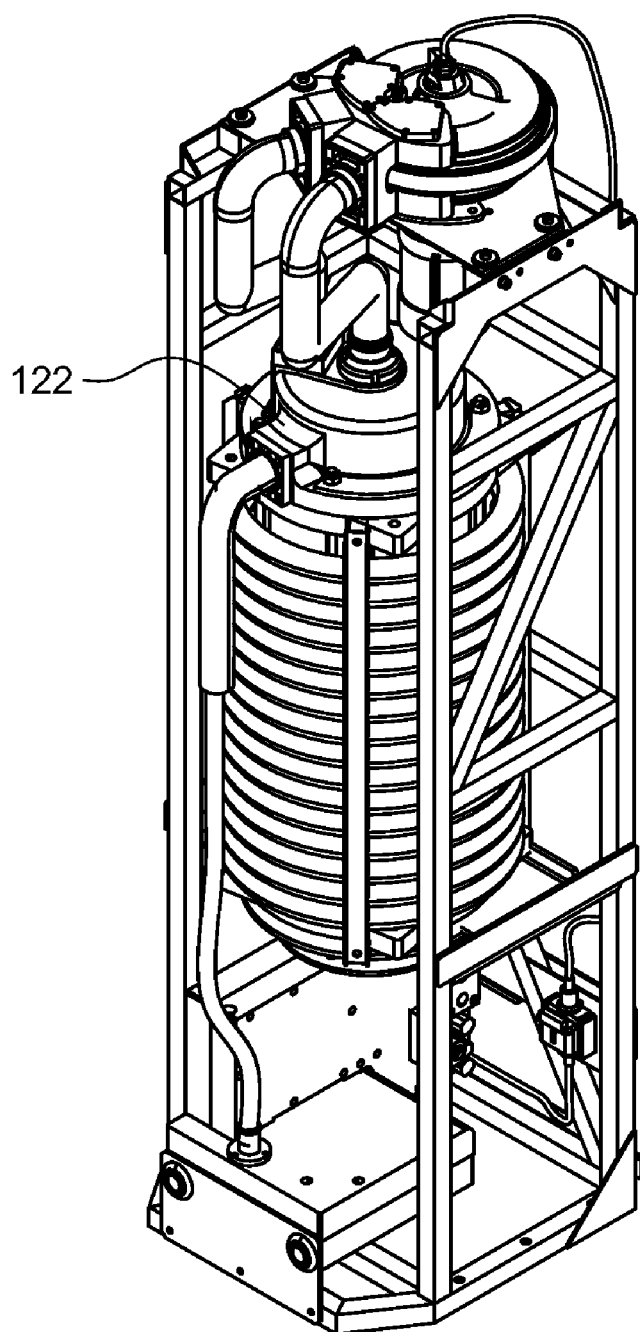


FIG.1F

130

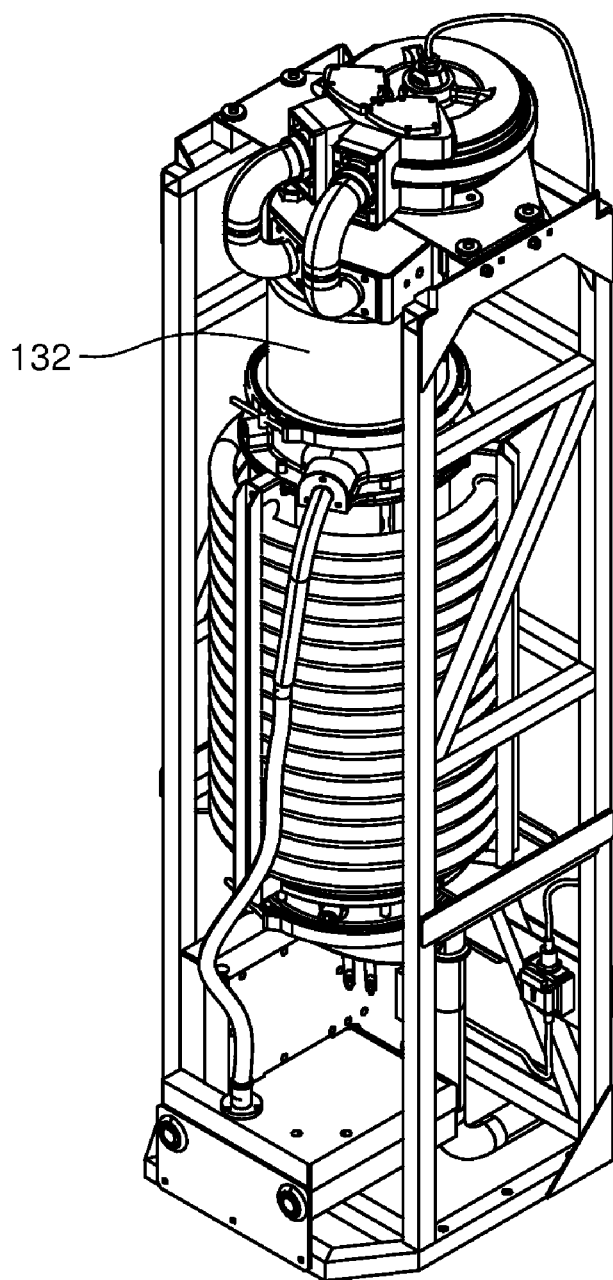


FIG.1G

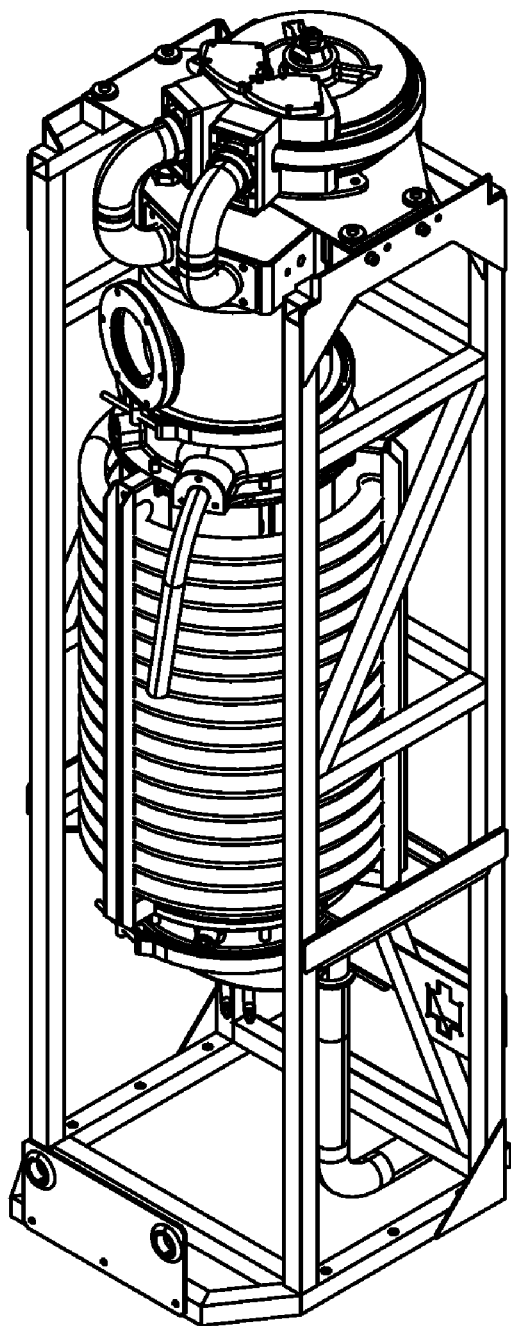


FIG.1H

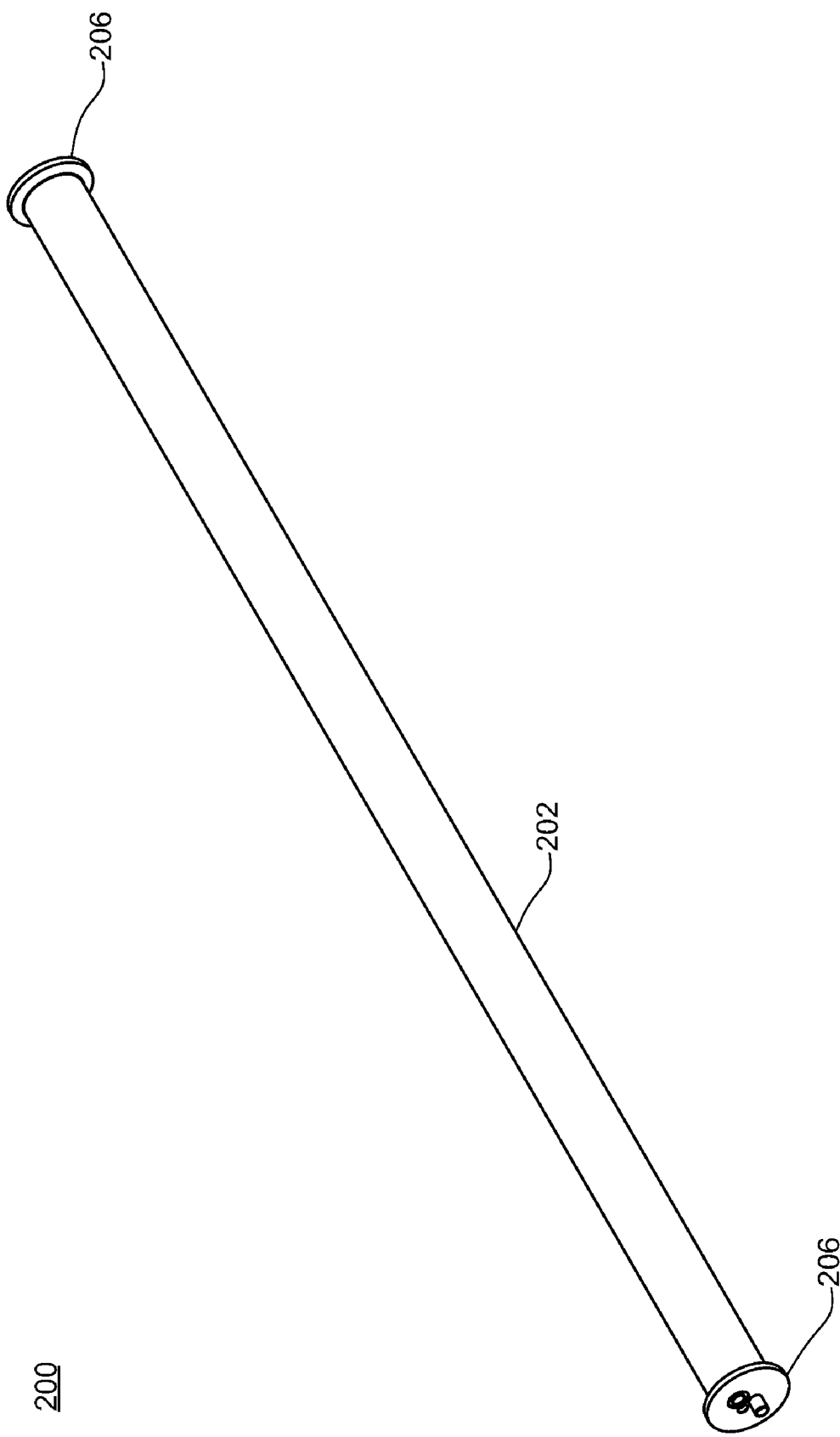


FIG.2

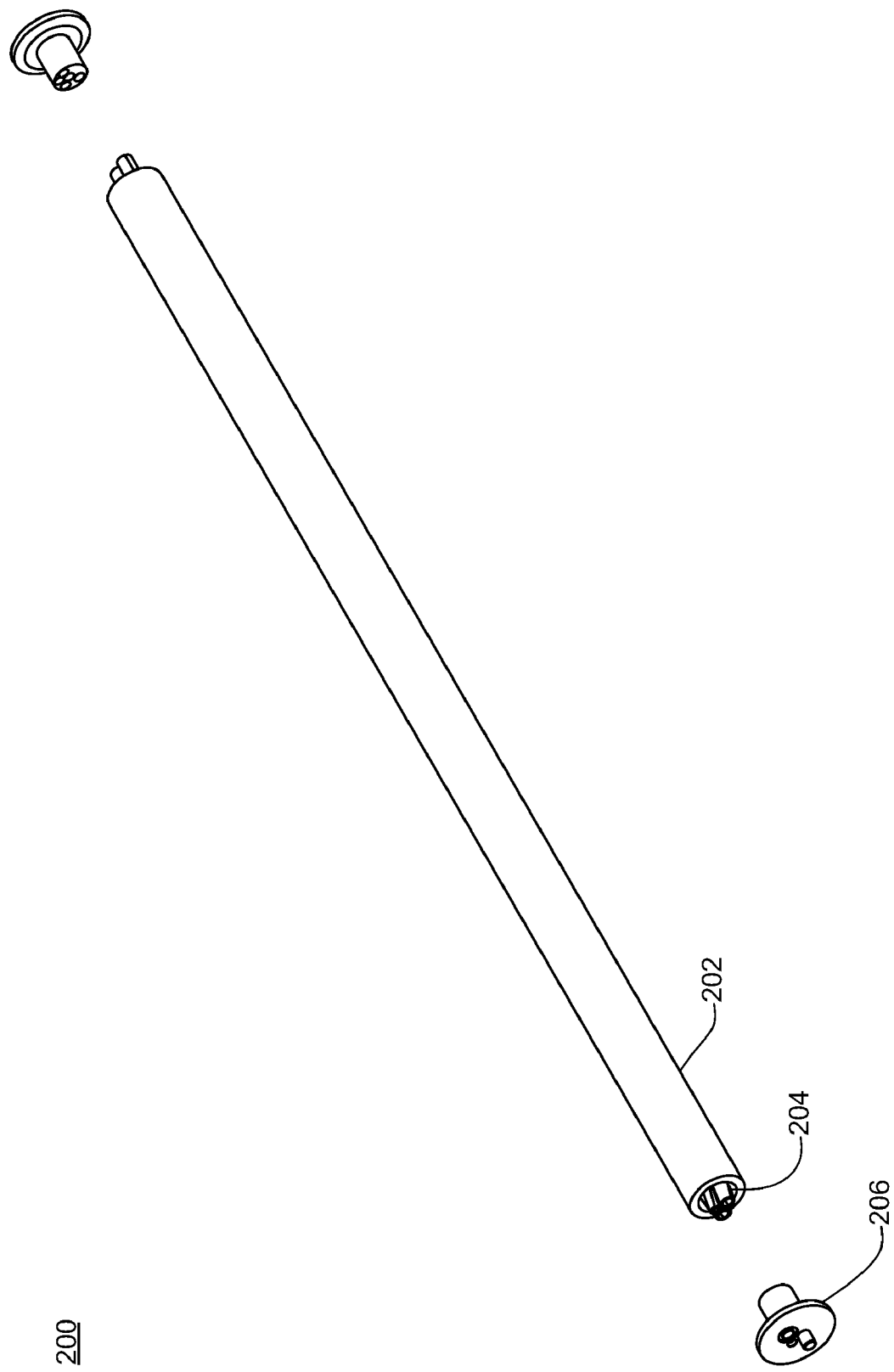


FIG. 2A

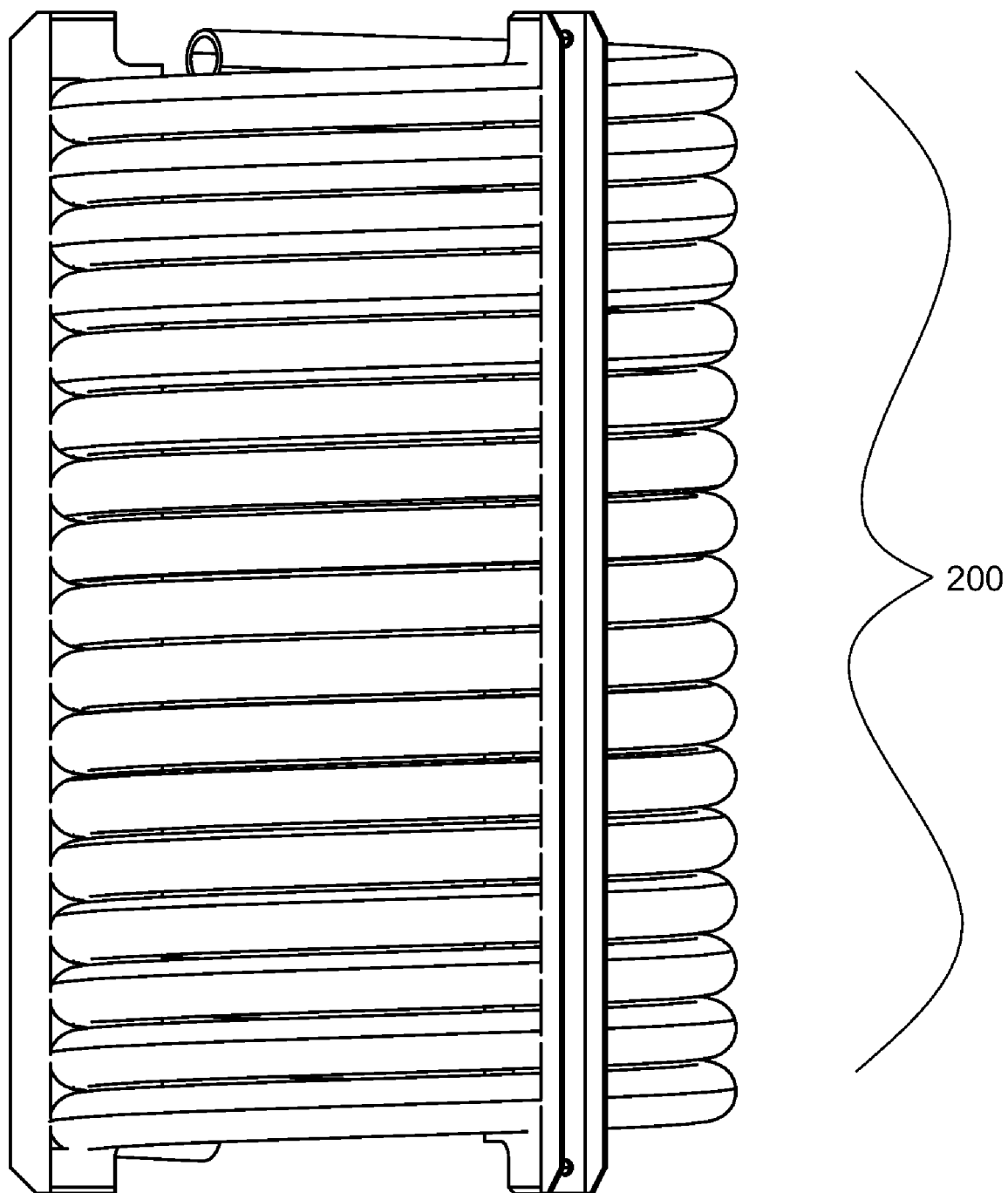


FIG.2B

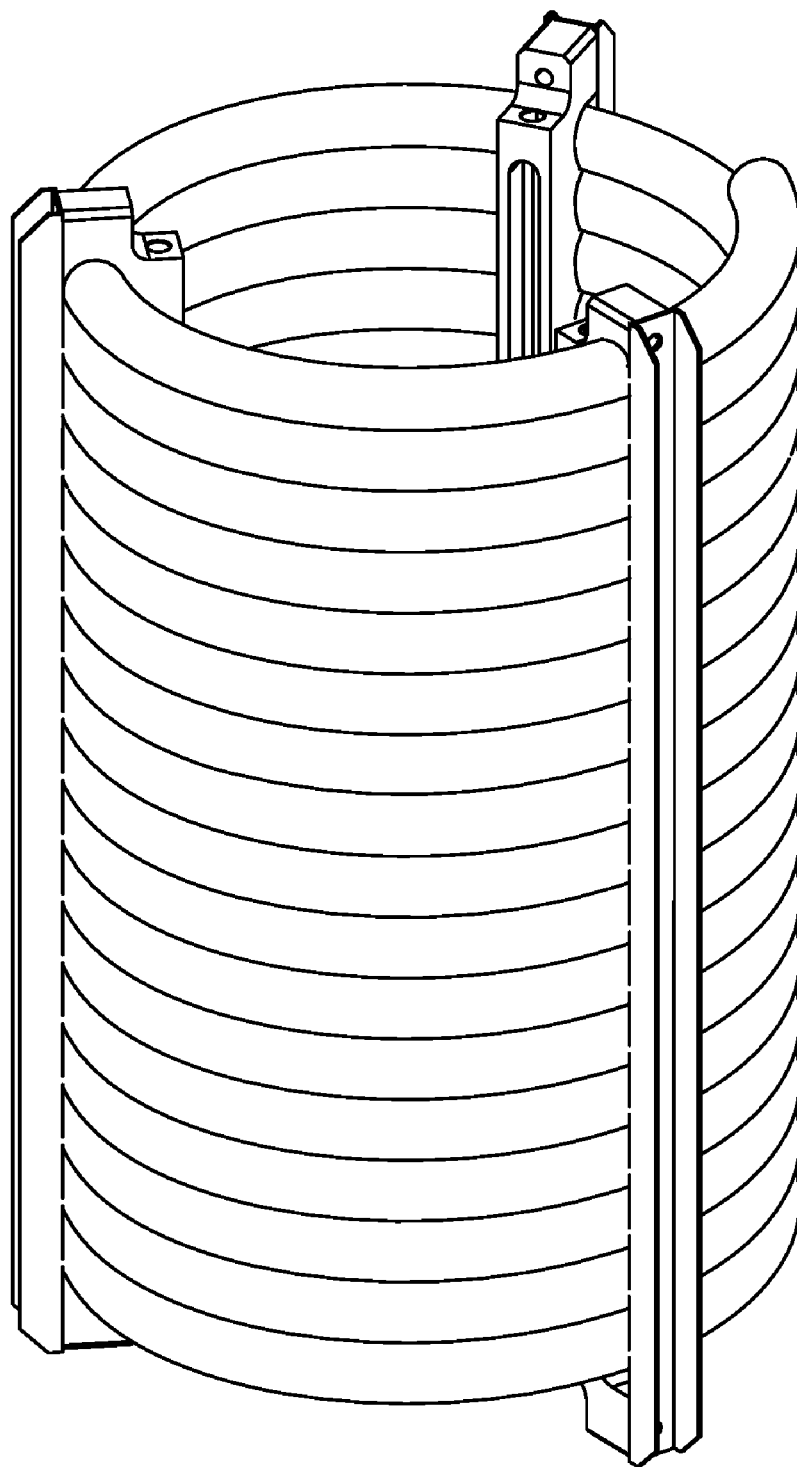


FIG.2C

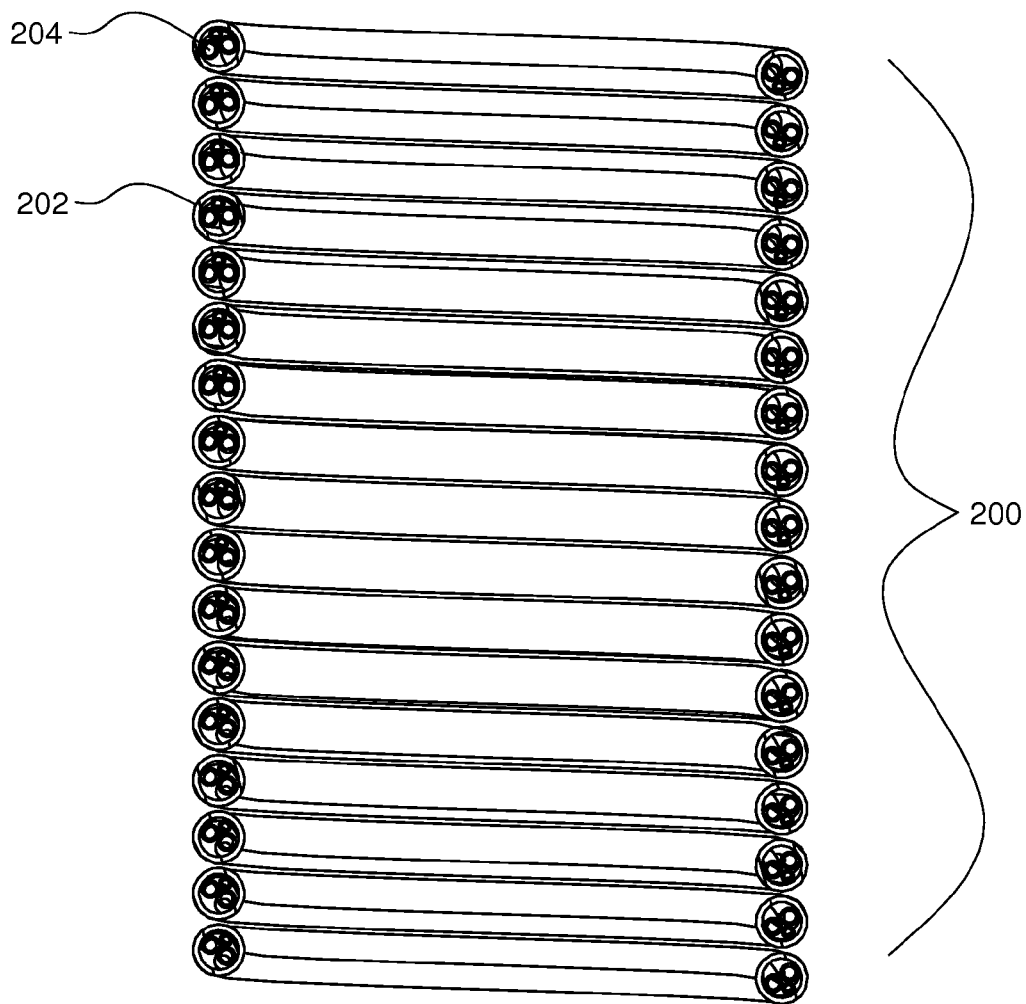
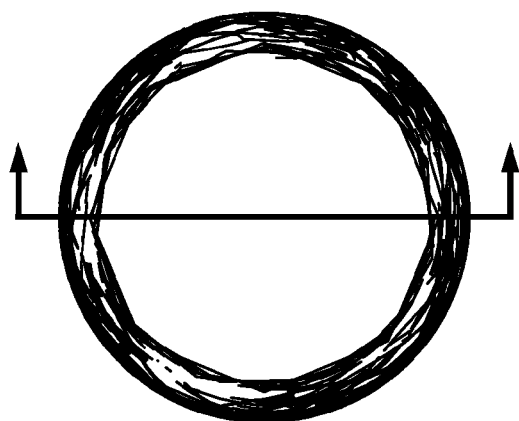


FIG.2D

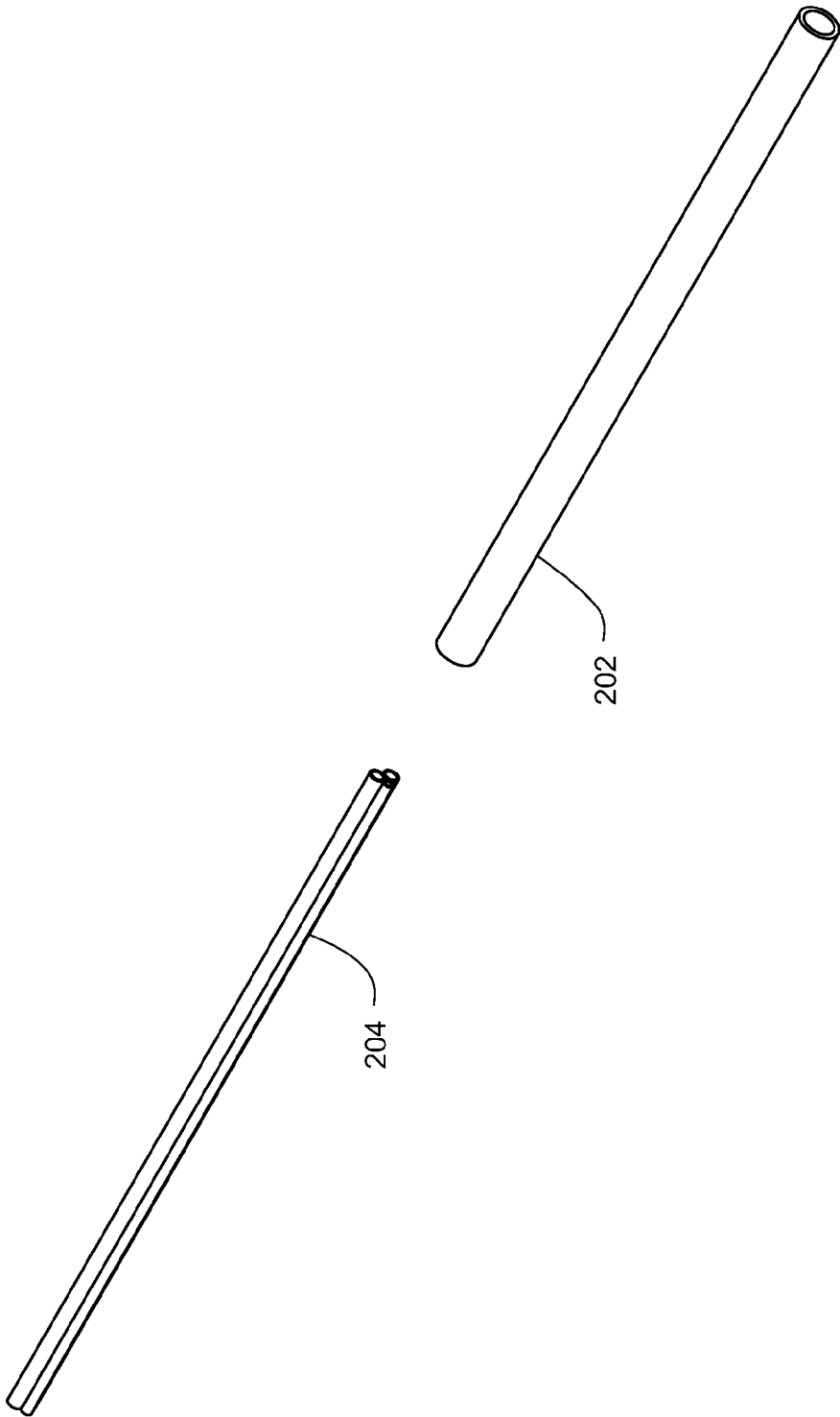


FIG. 2E

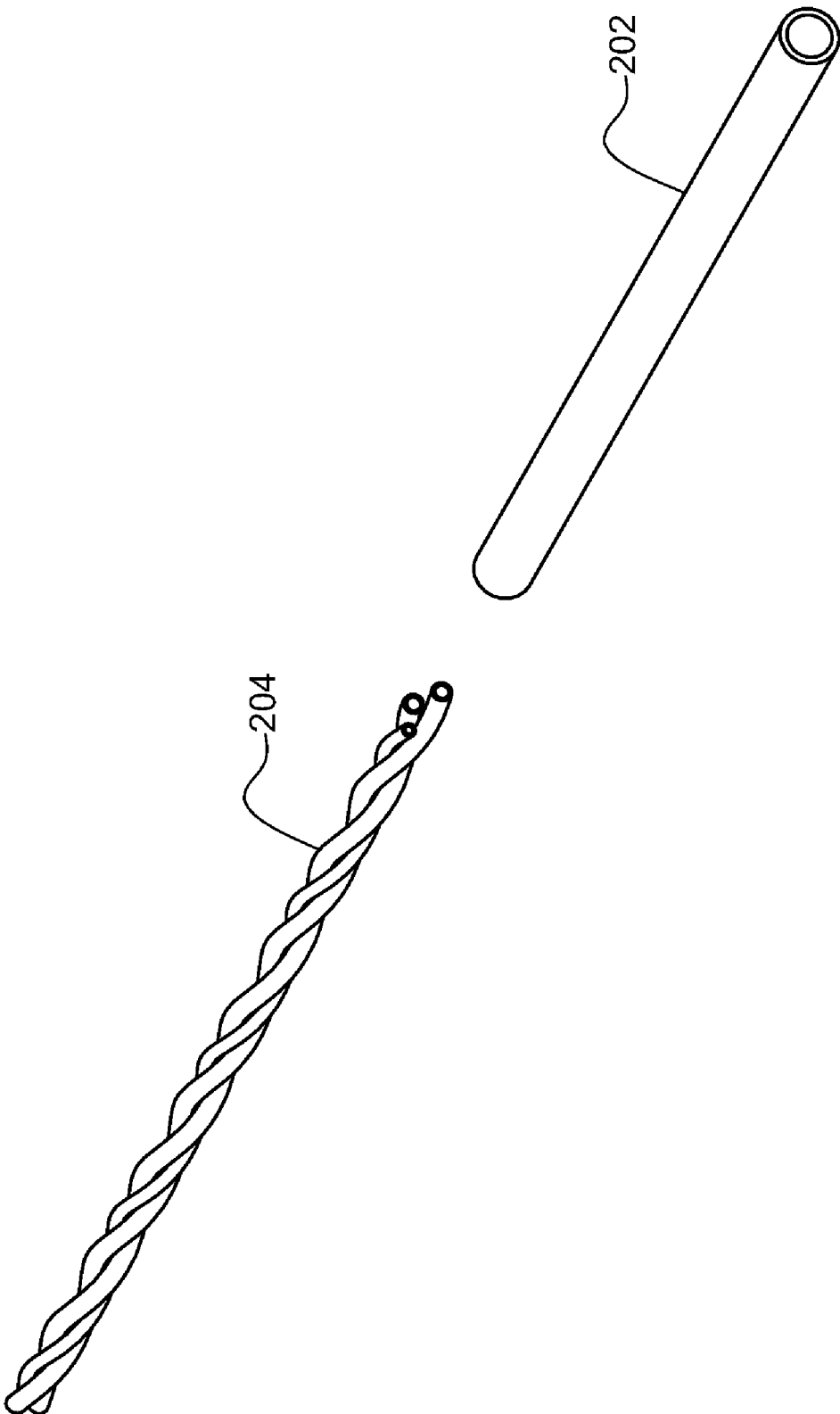


FIG.2F

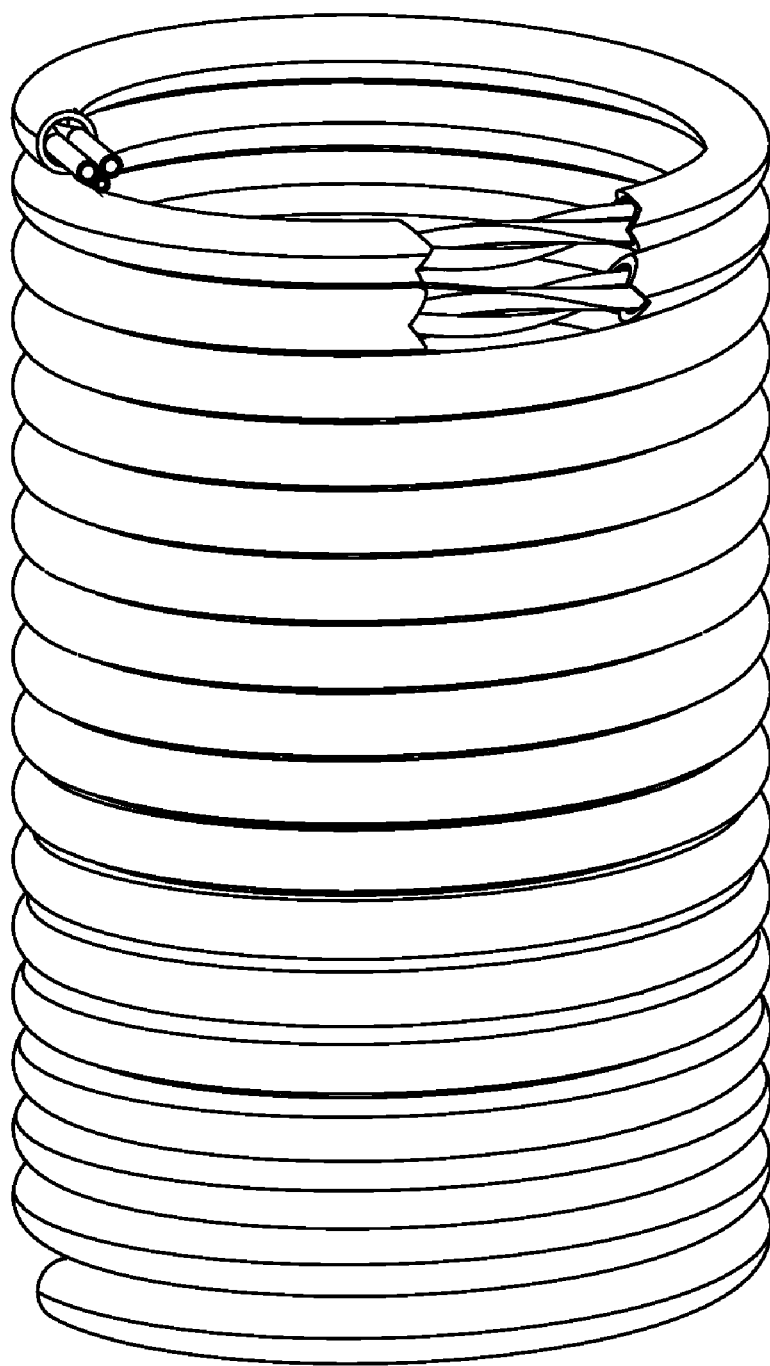


FIG.2G

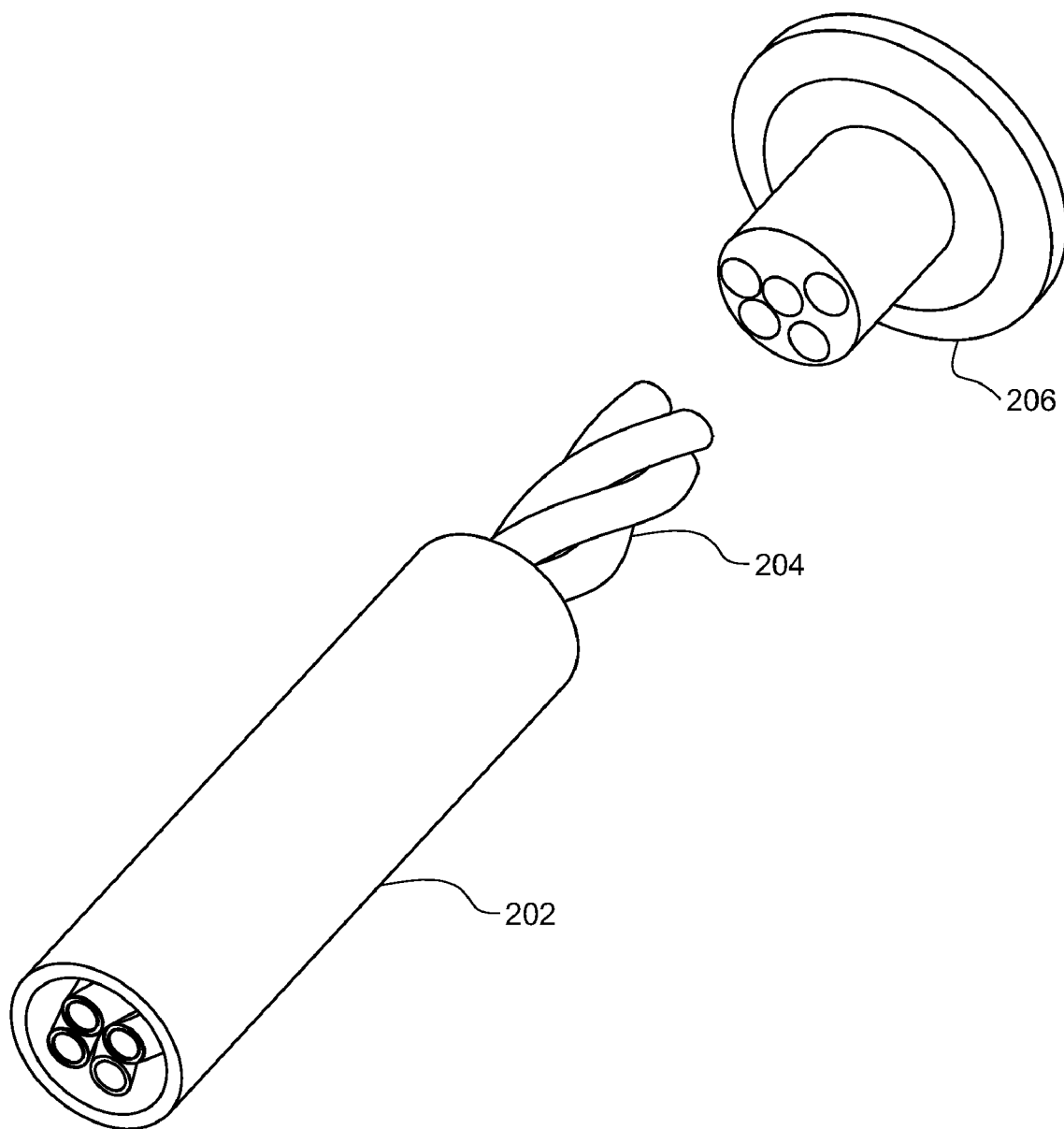


FIG.2H

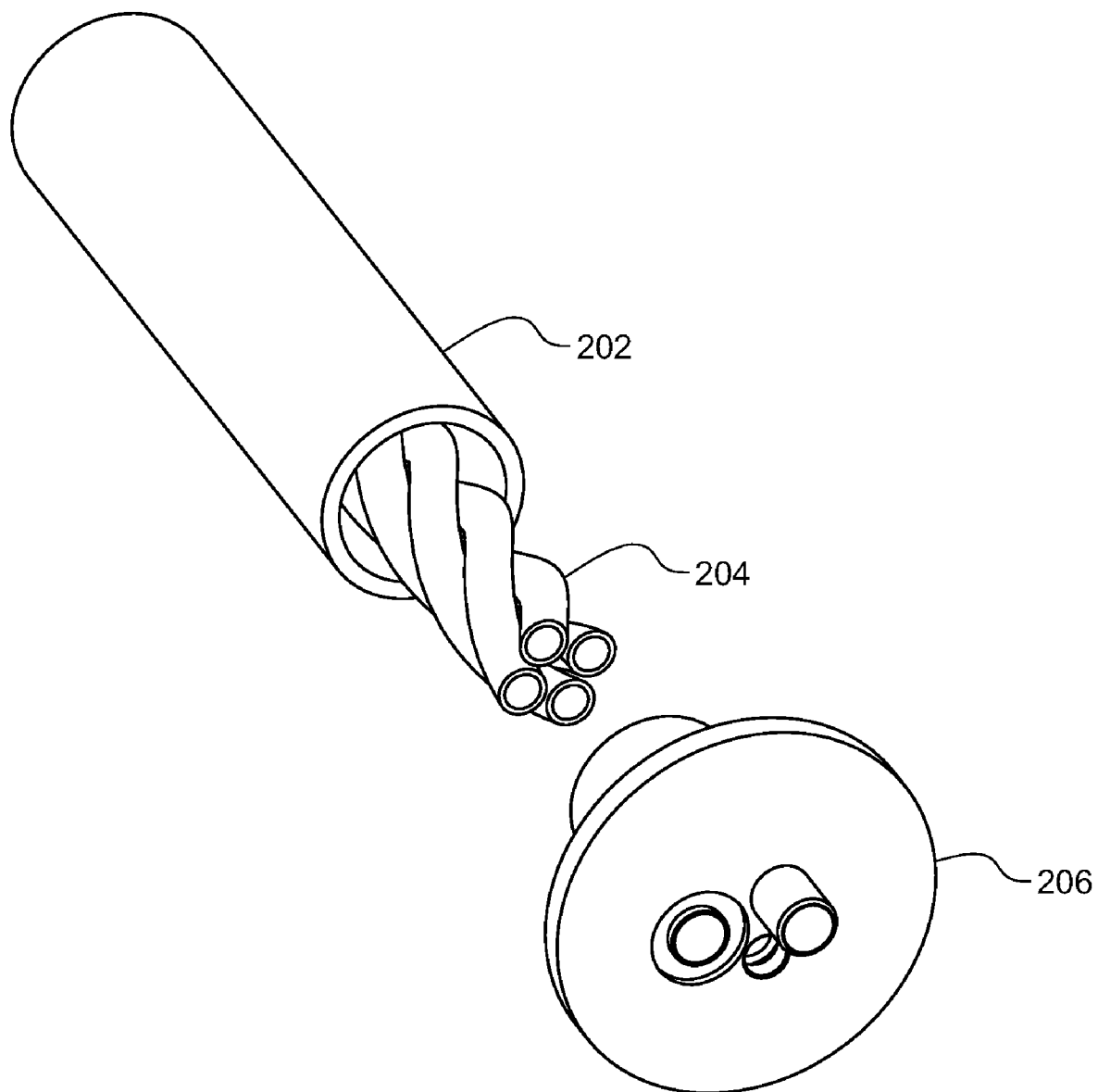


FIG. 2I

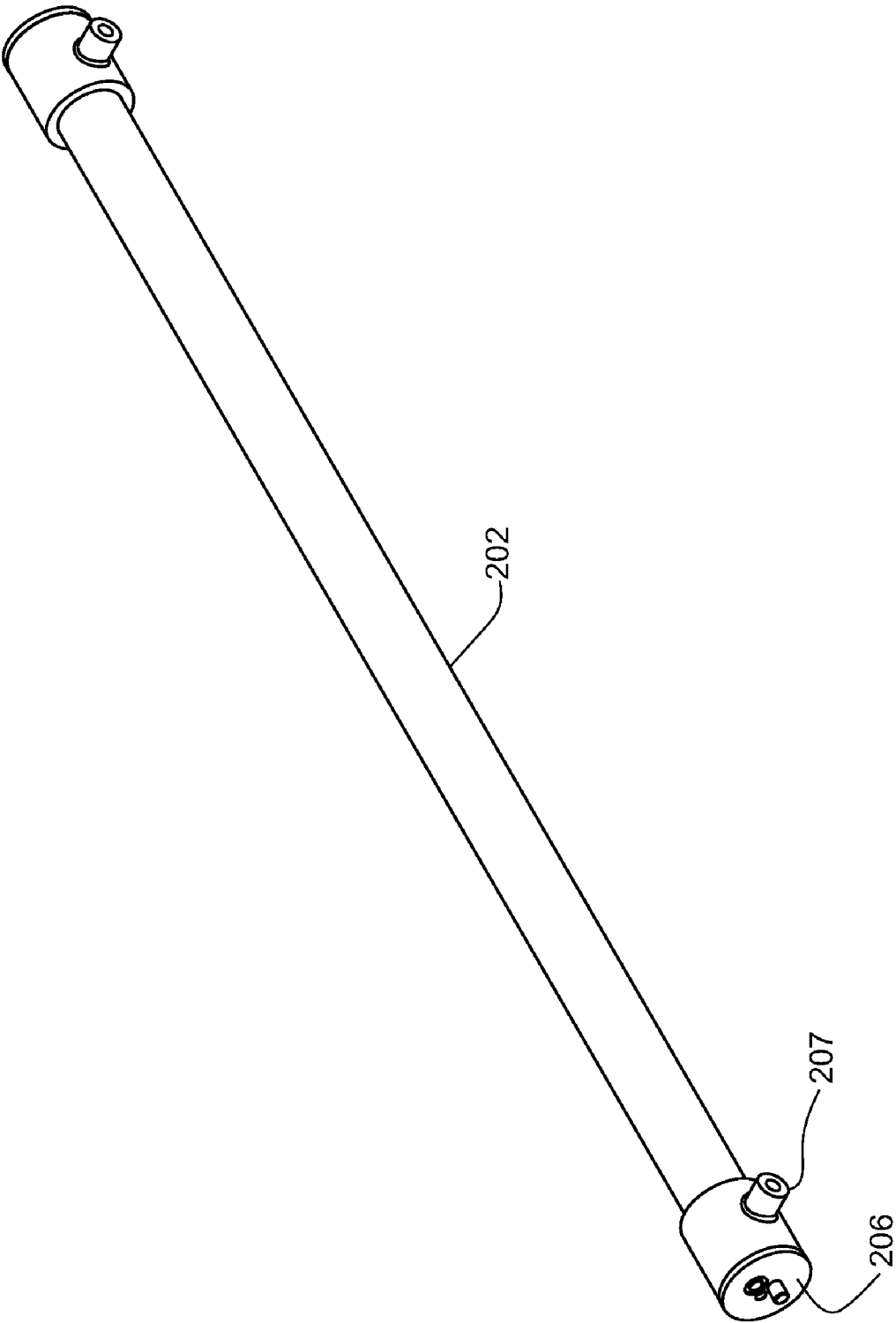
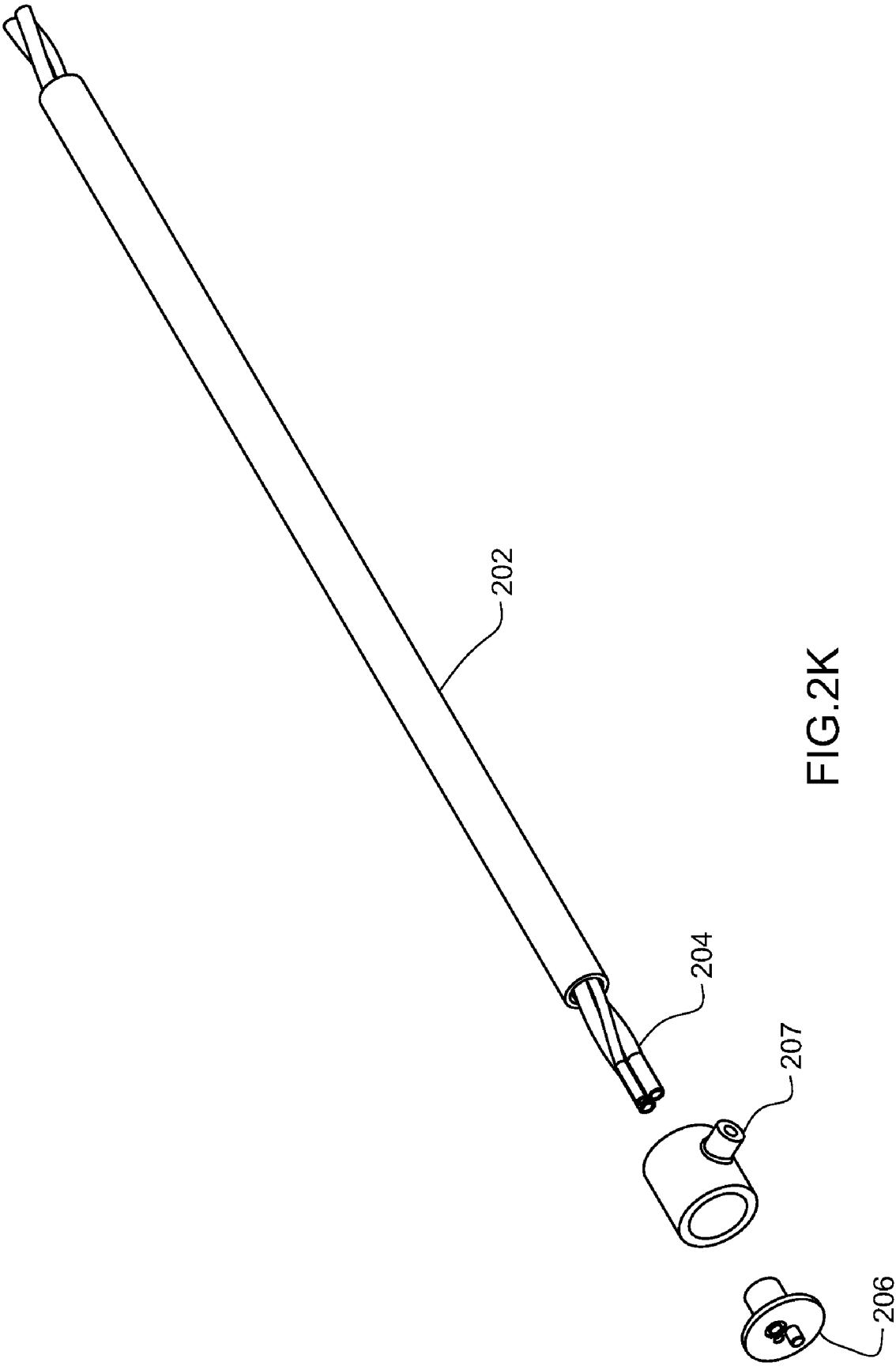


FIG. 2J



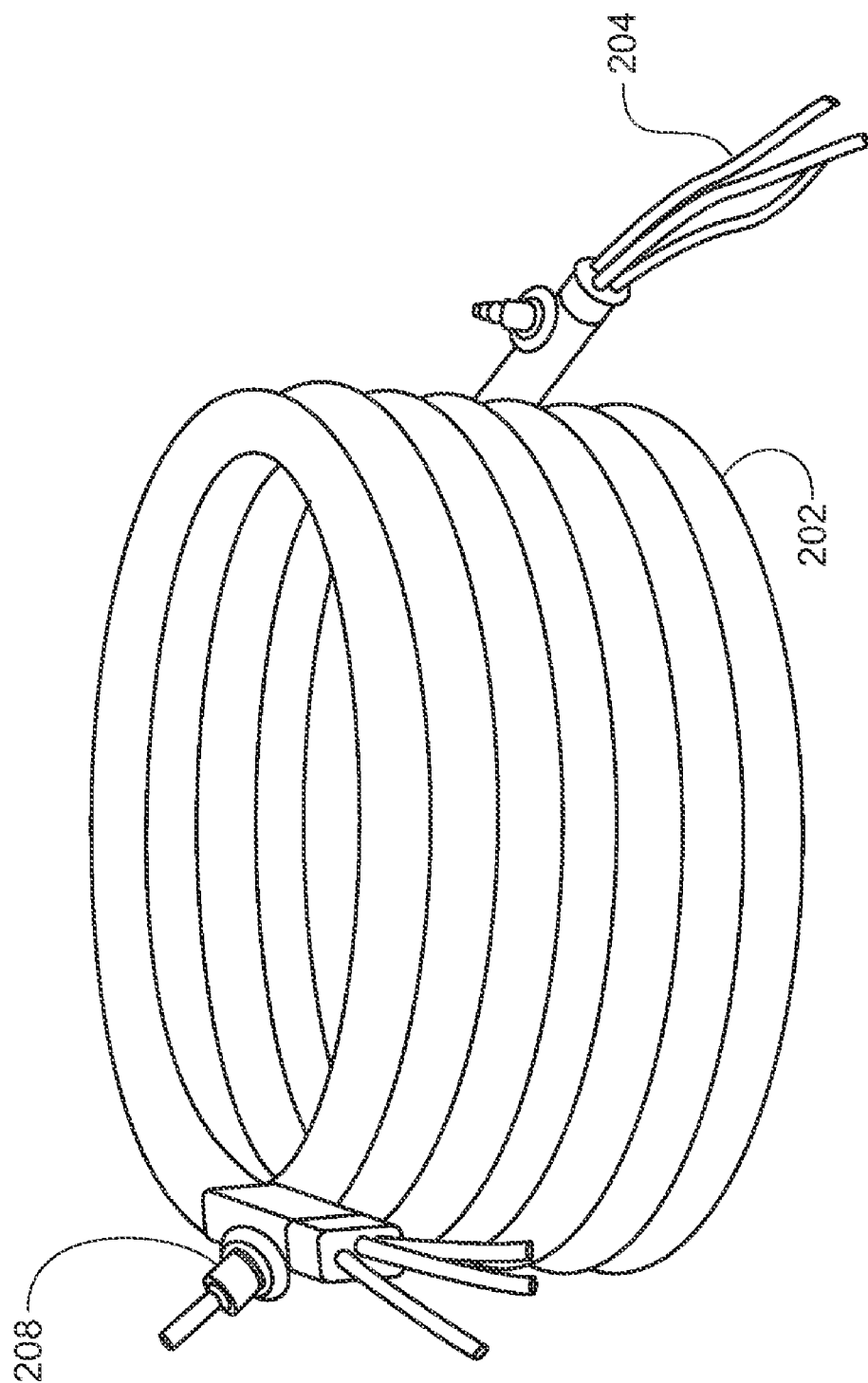


FIG. 2L

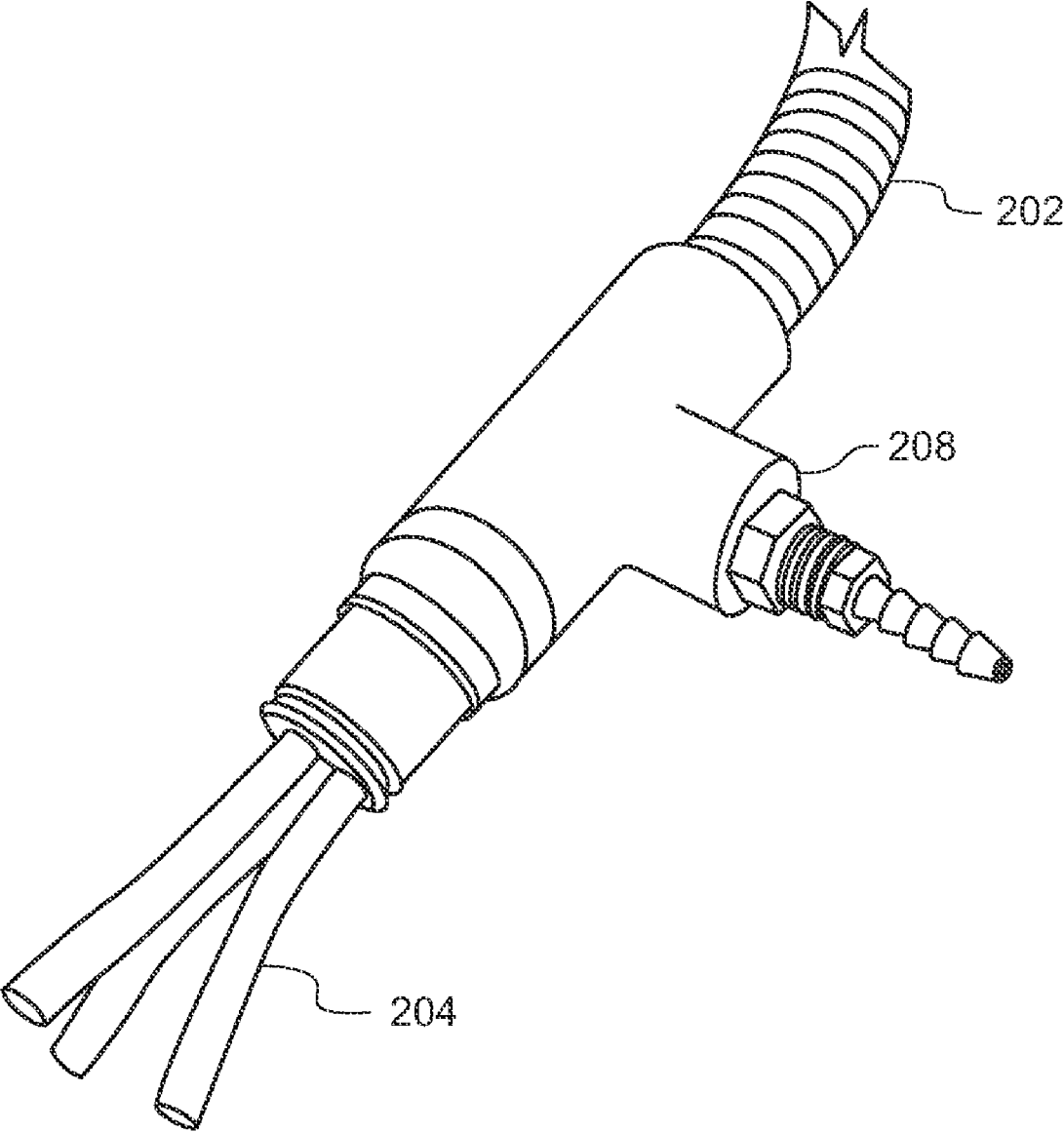


FIG. 2M

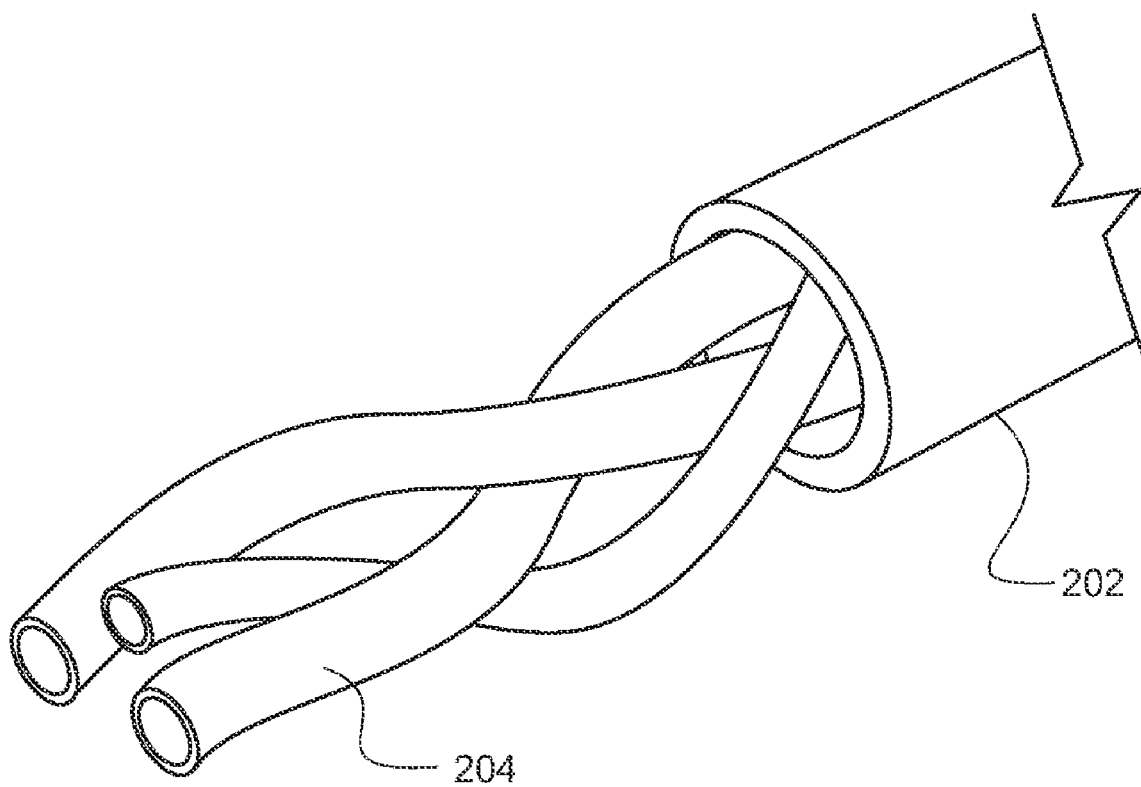


FIG. 2N

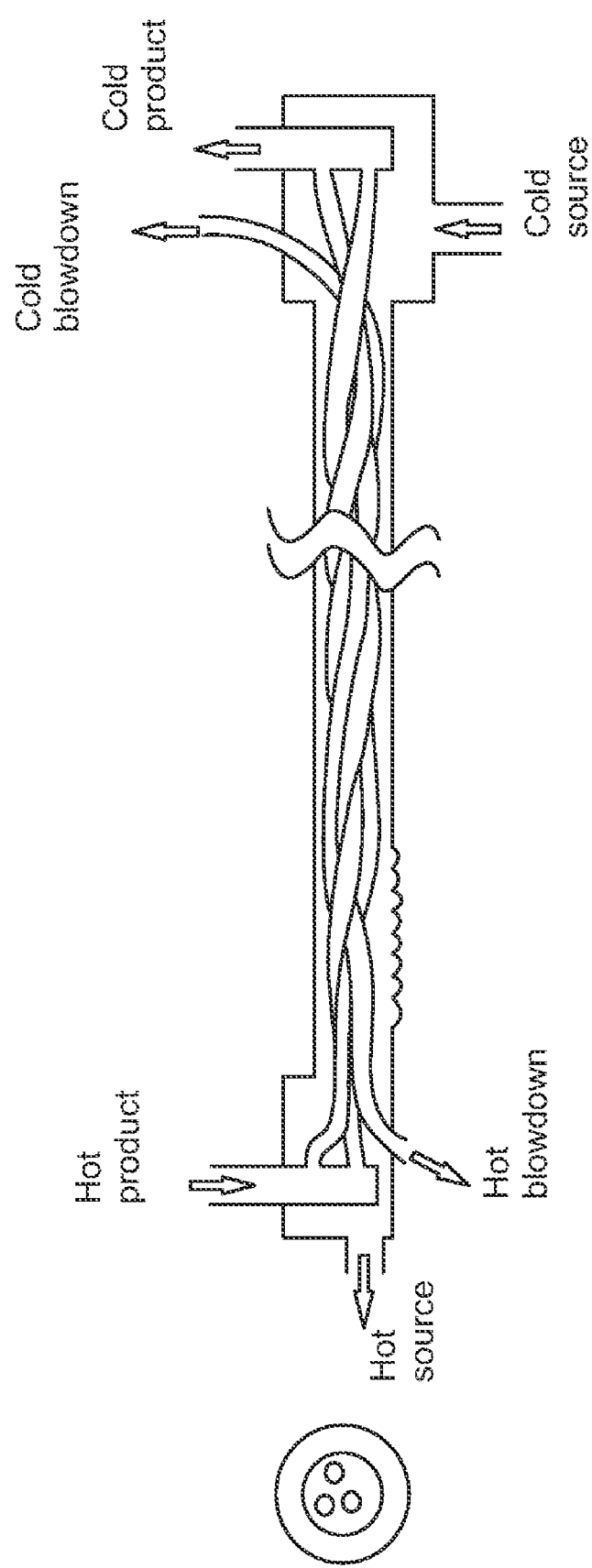


FIG.20

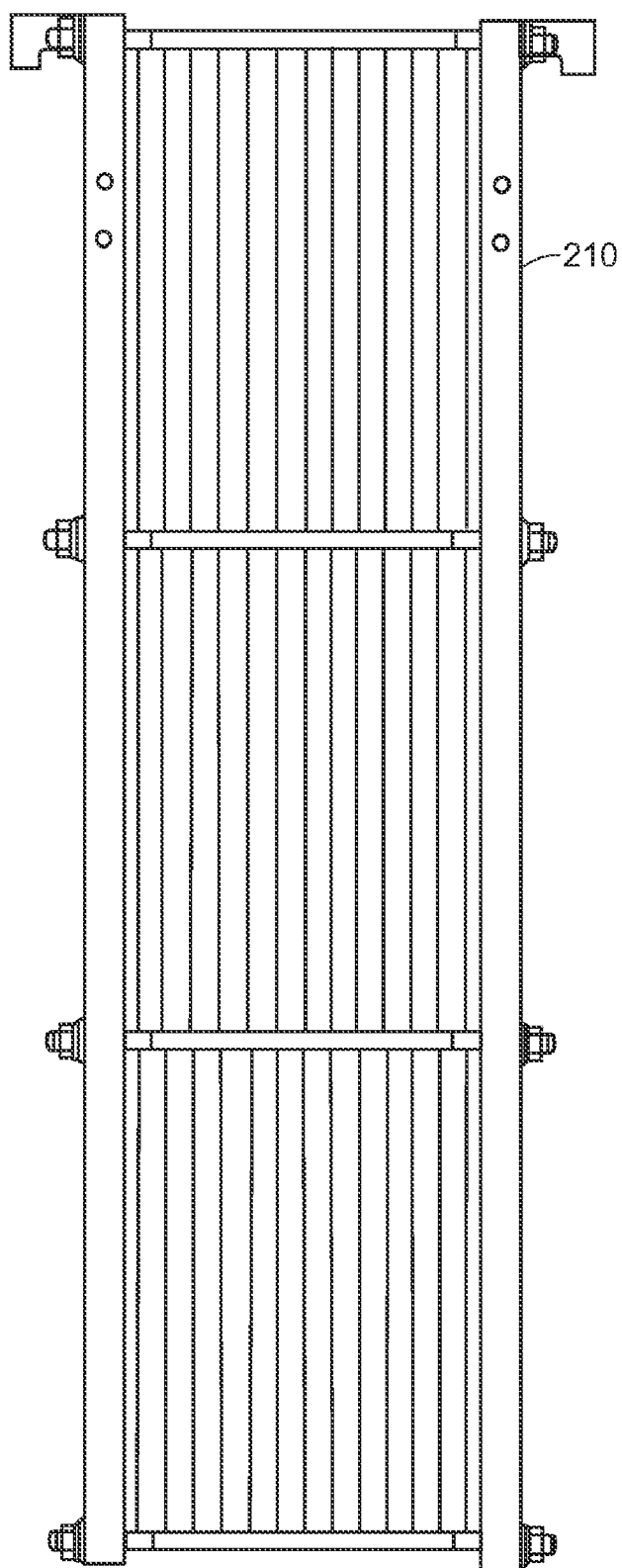


FIG. 2P

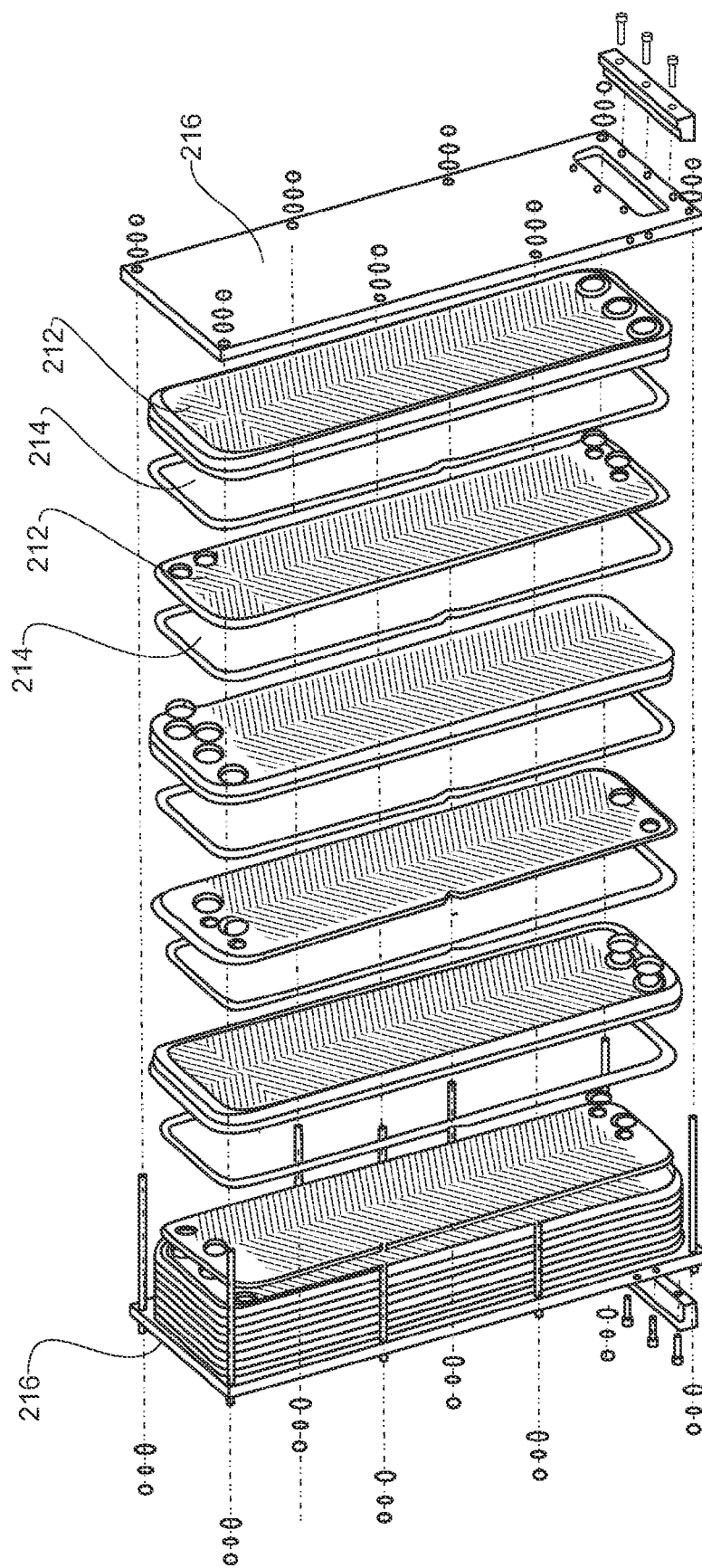


FIG. 2Q

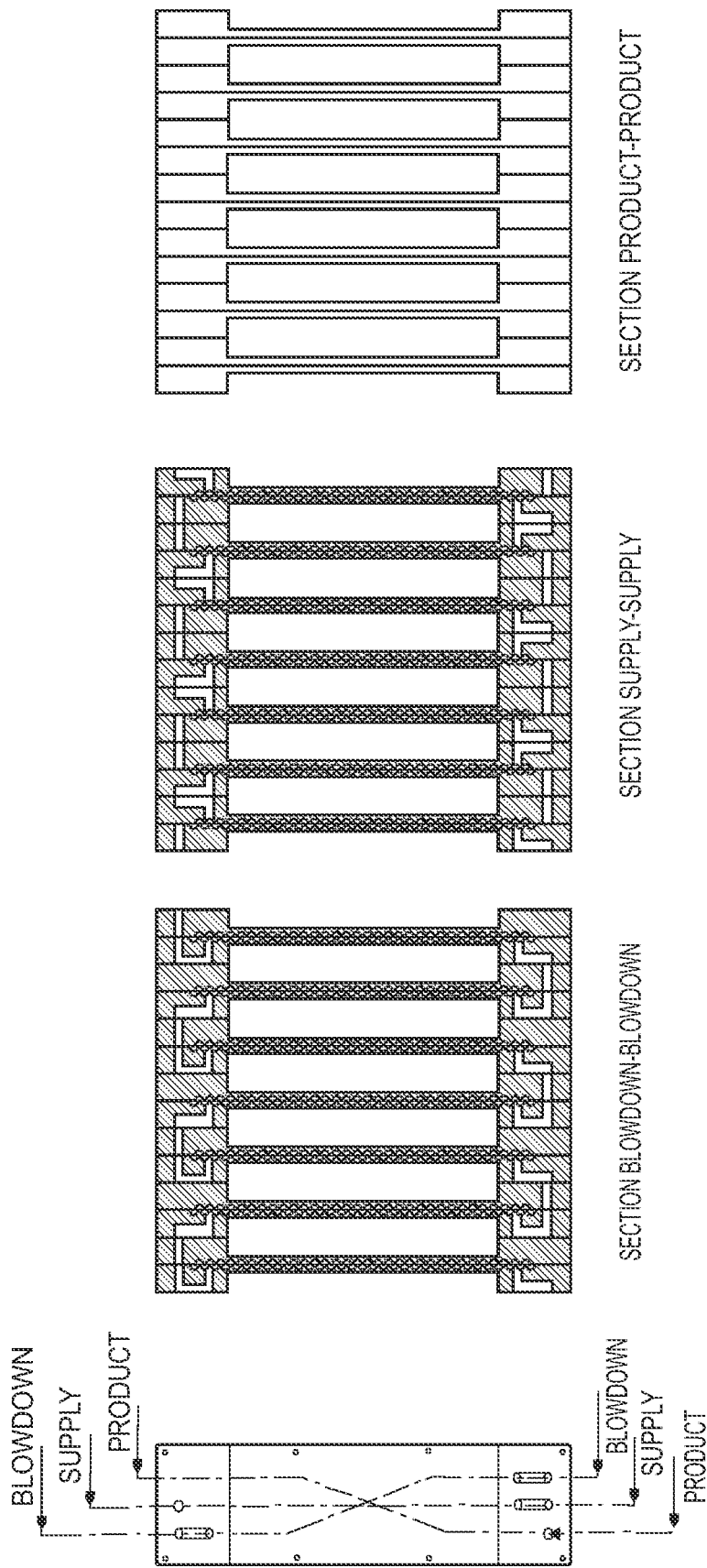


FIG. 2R

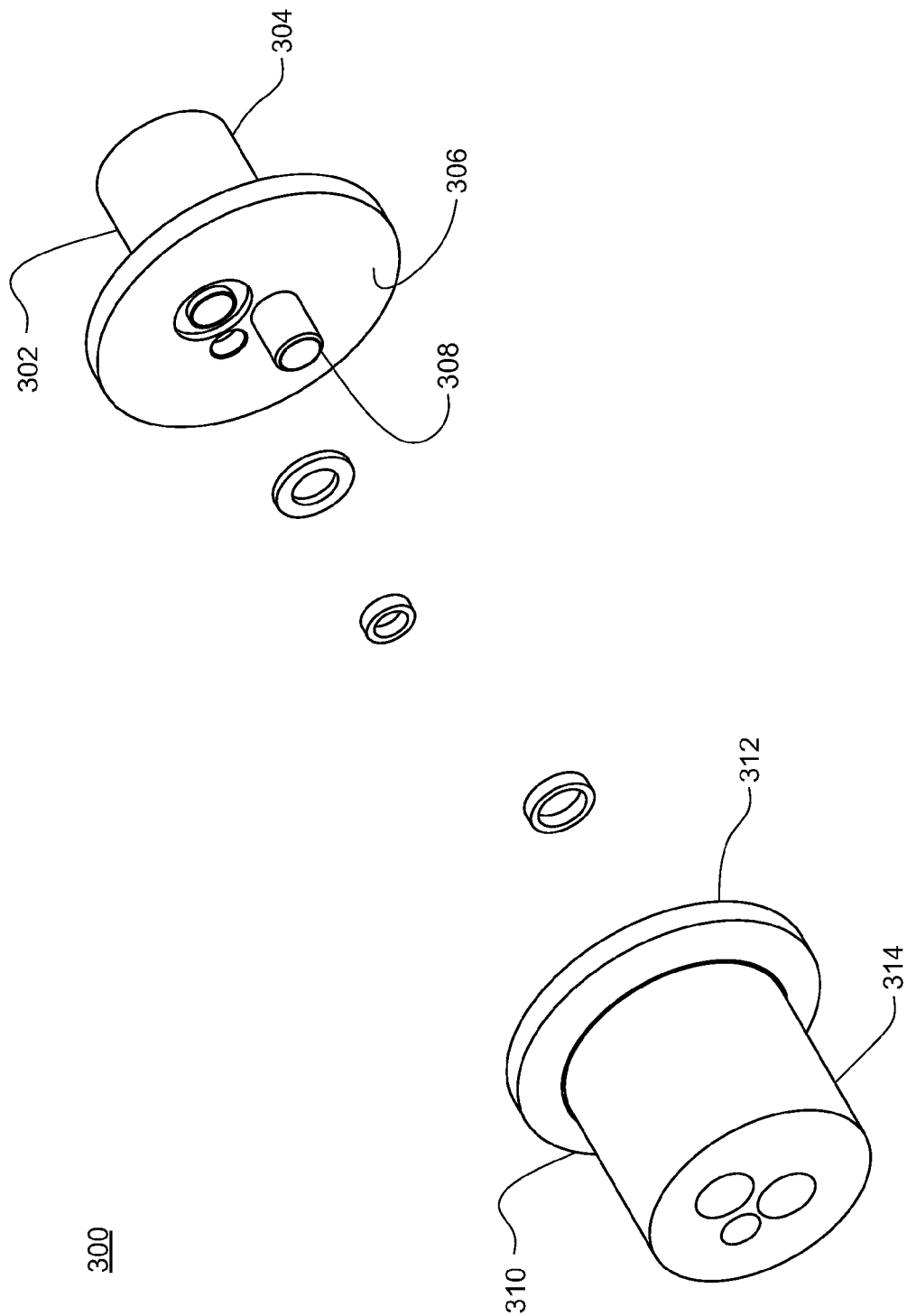


FIG.3

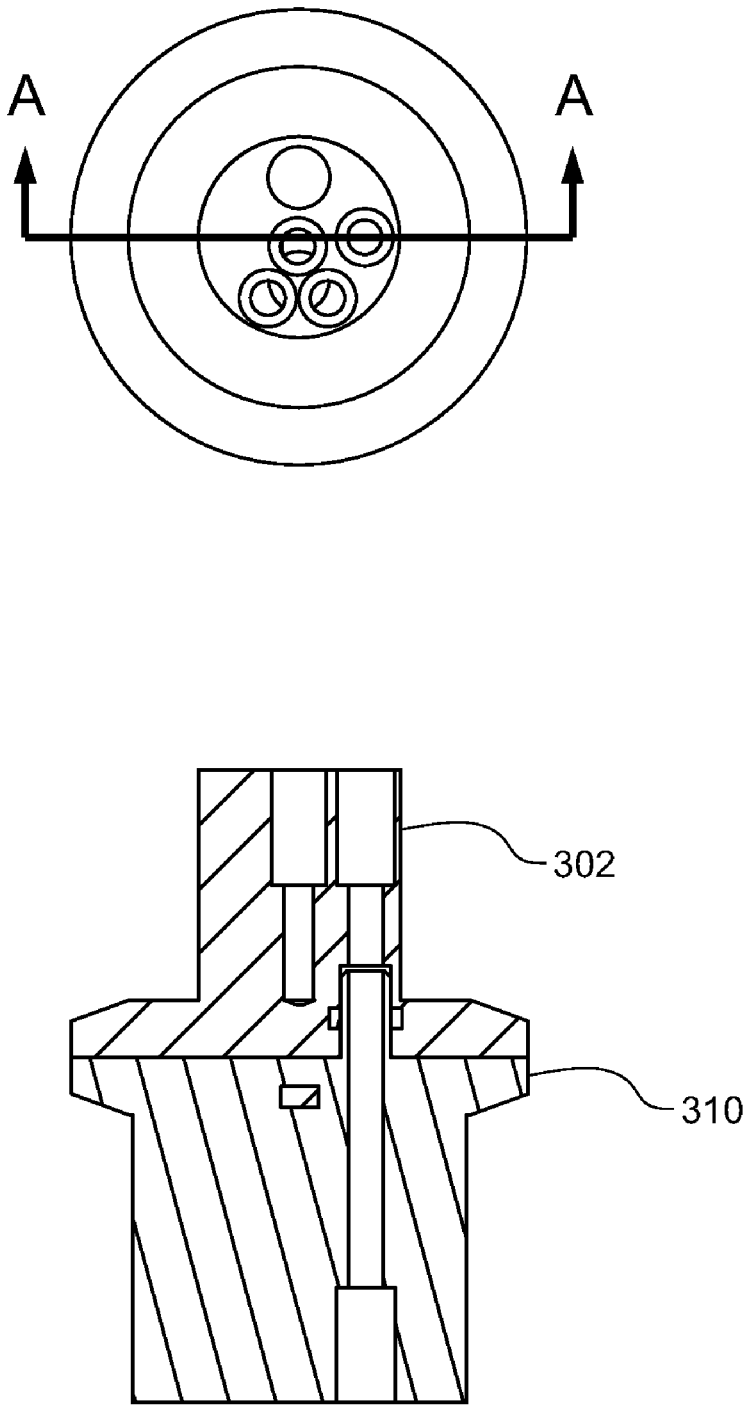


FIG.3A

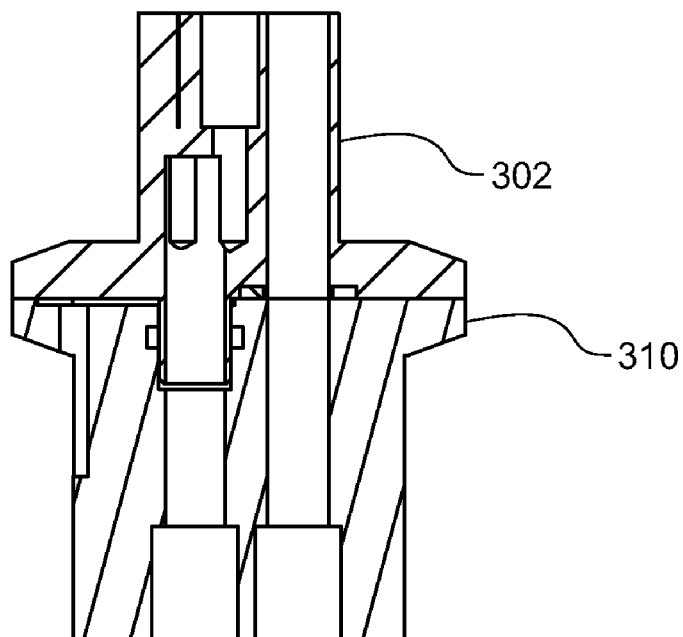
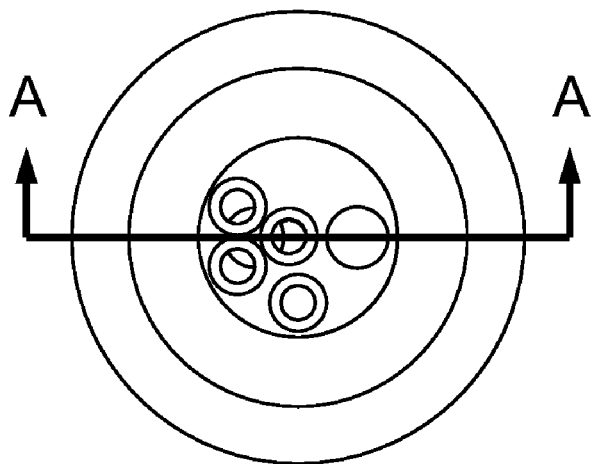


FIG.3B

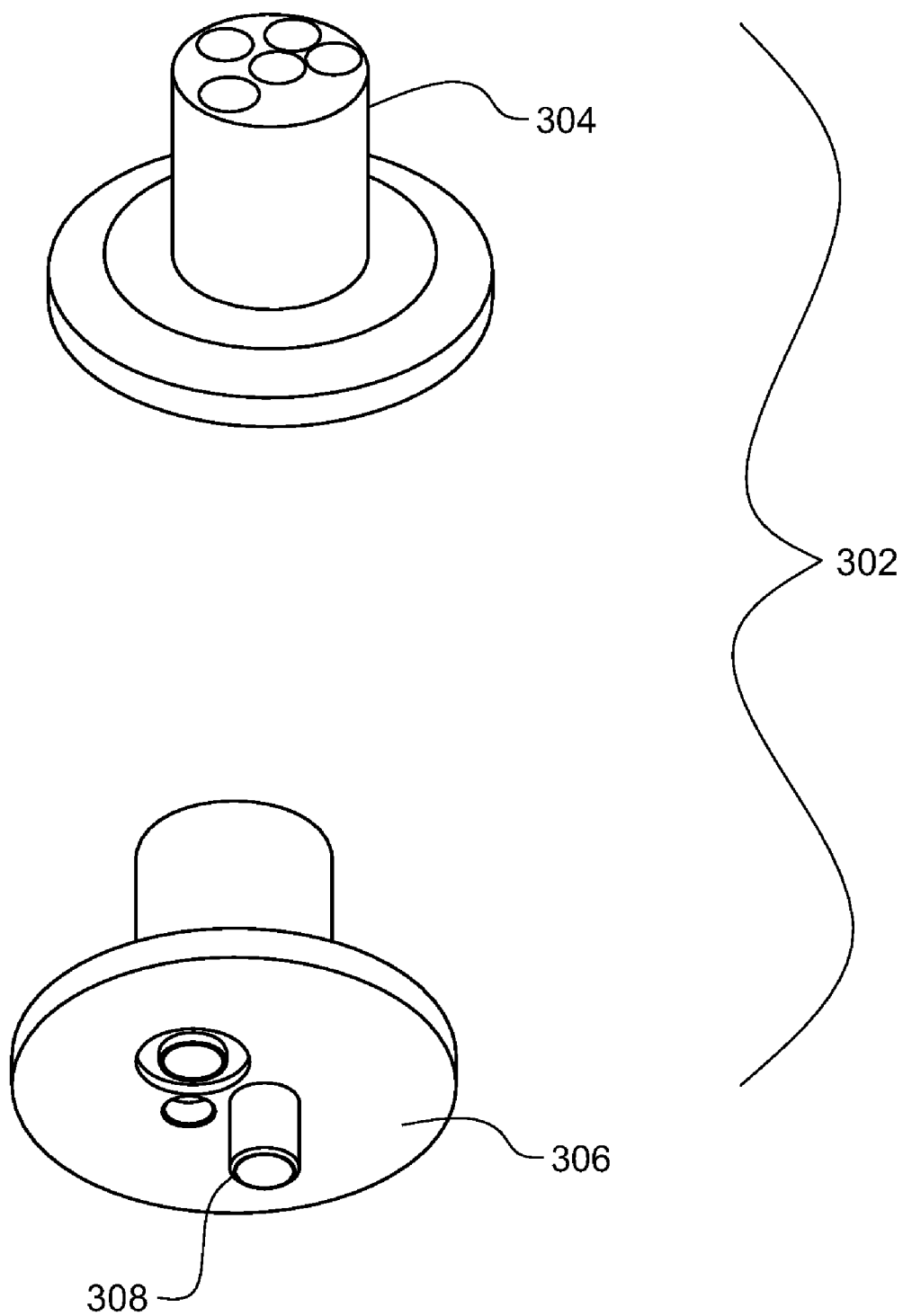


FIG.3C

302

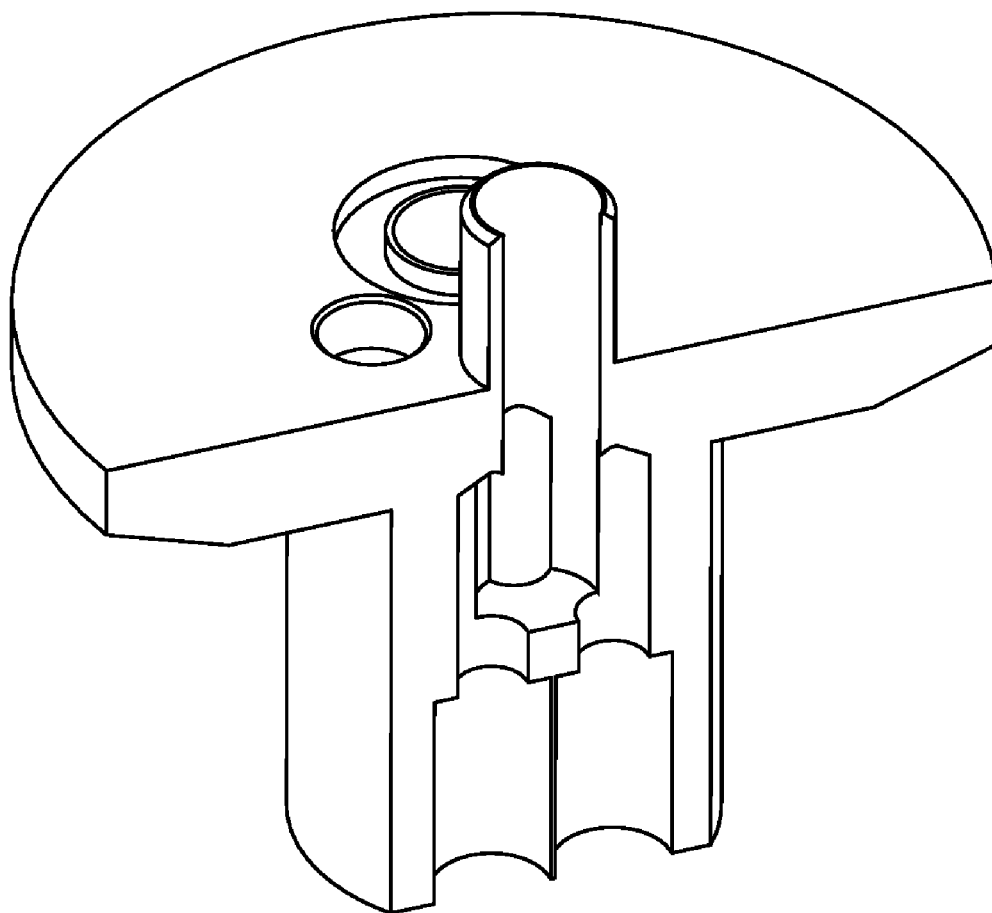
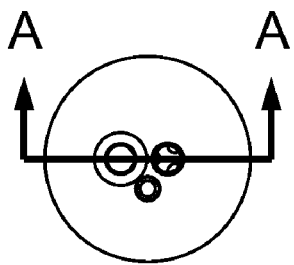


FIG.3D



302

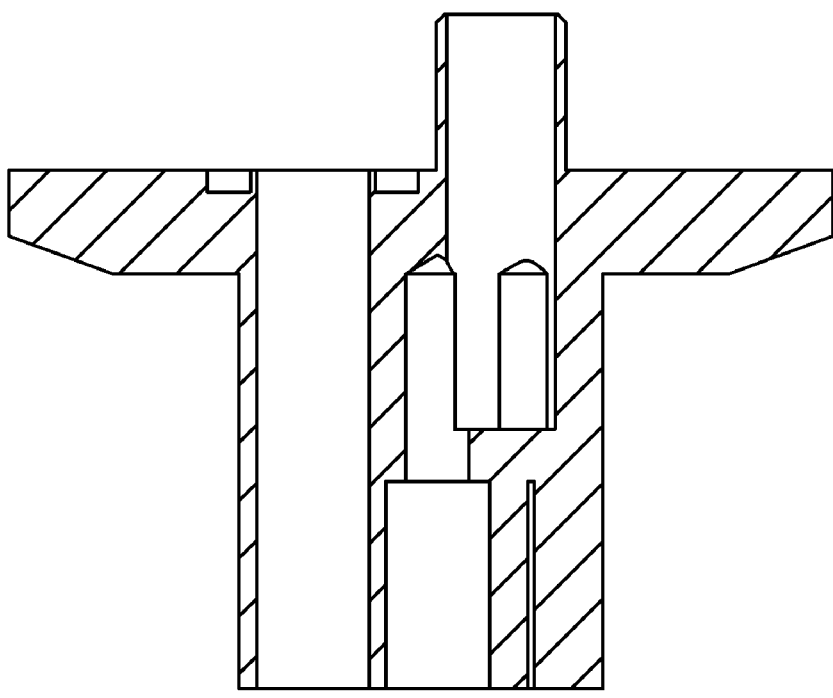
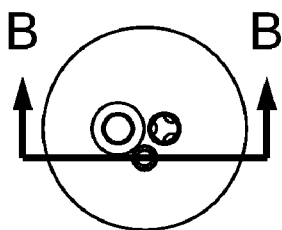


FIG.3E



302

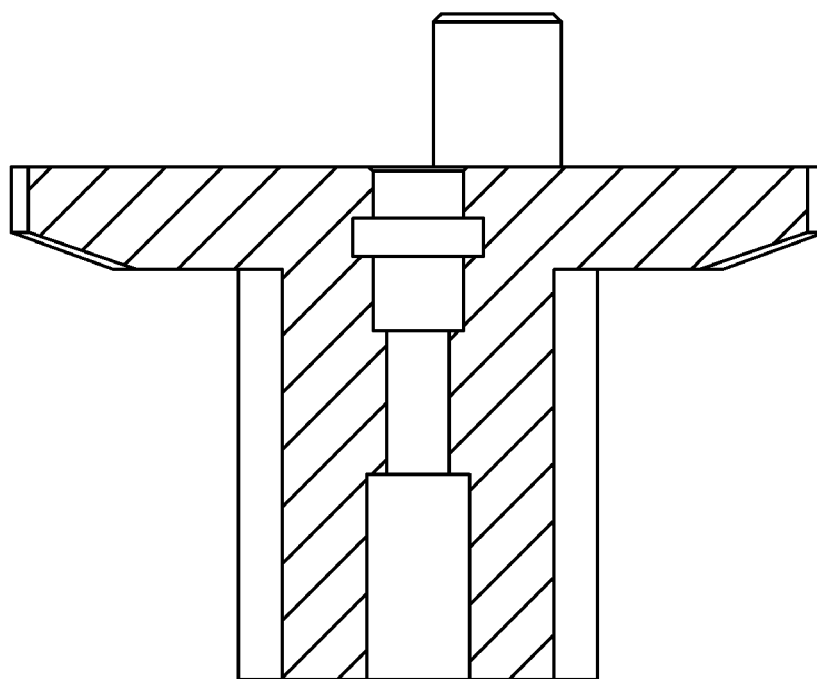


FIG.3F

310

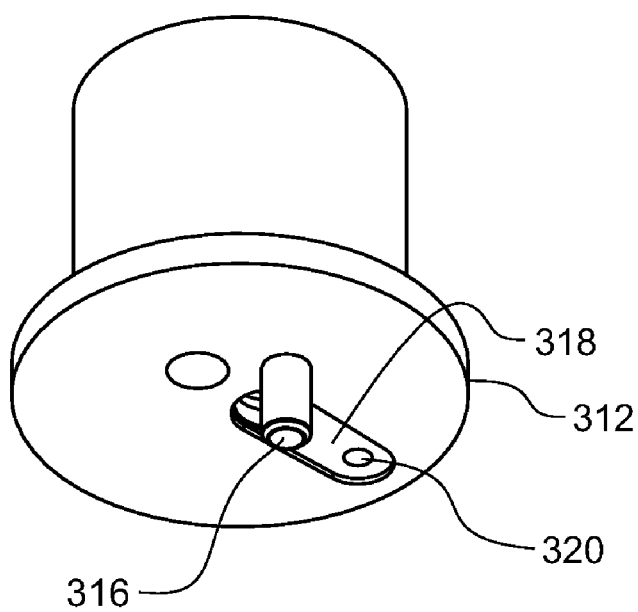
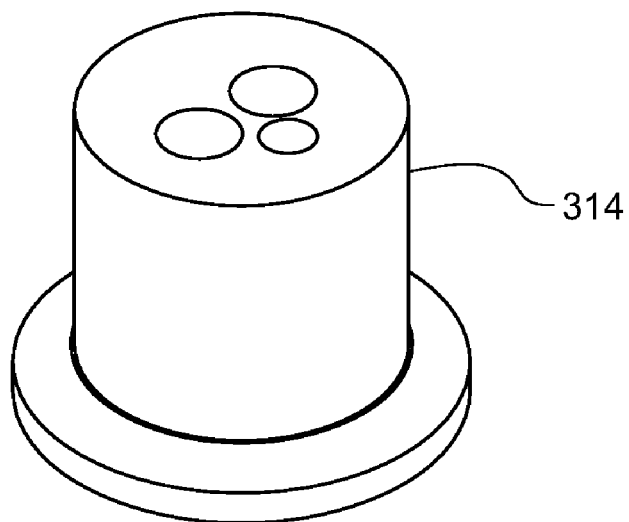


FIG.3G

310

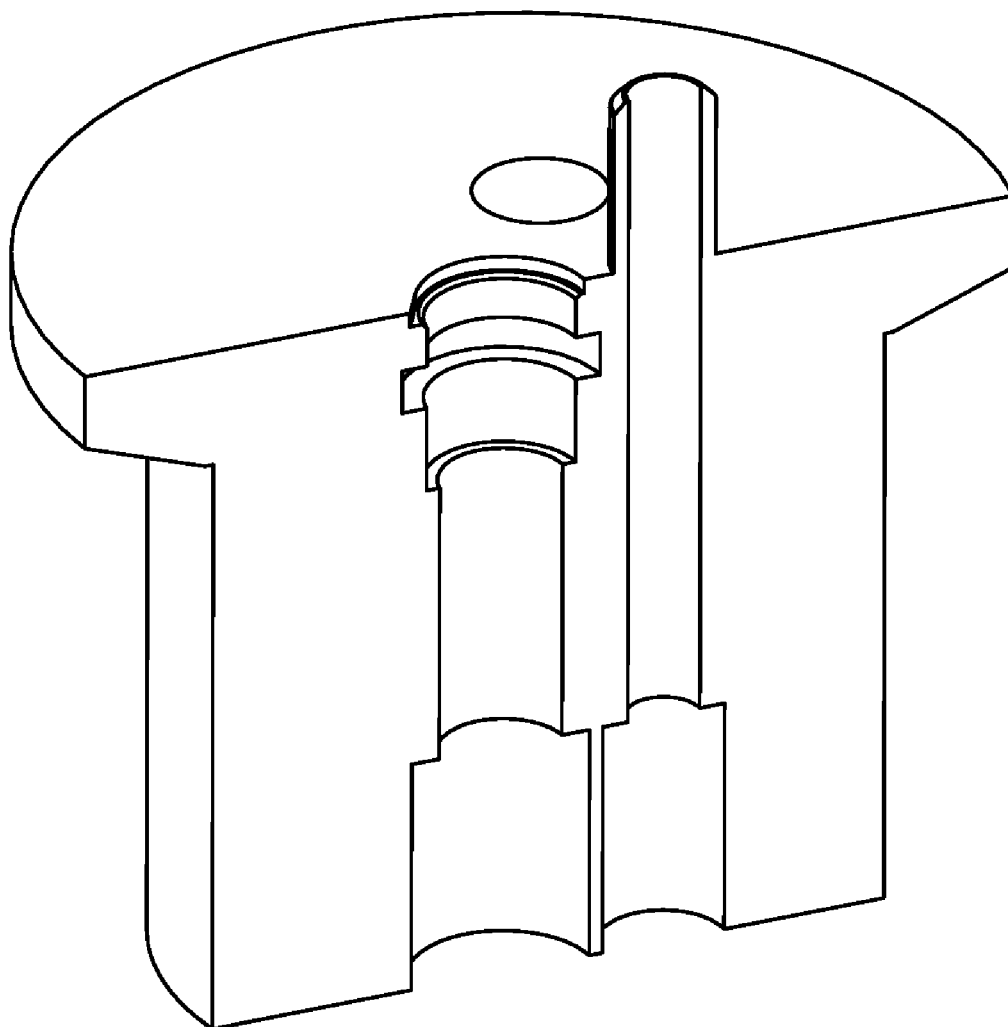
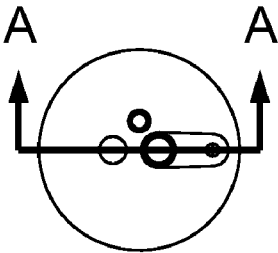


FIG.3H



310

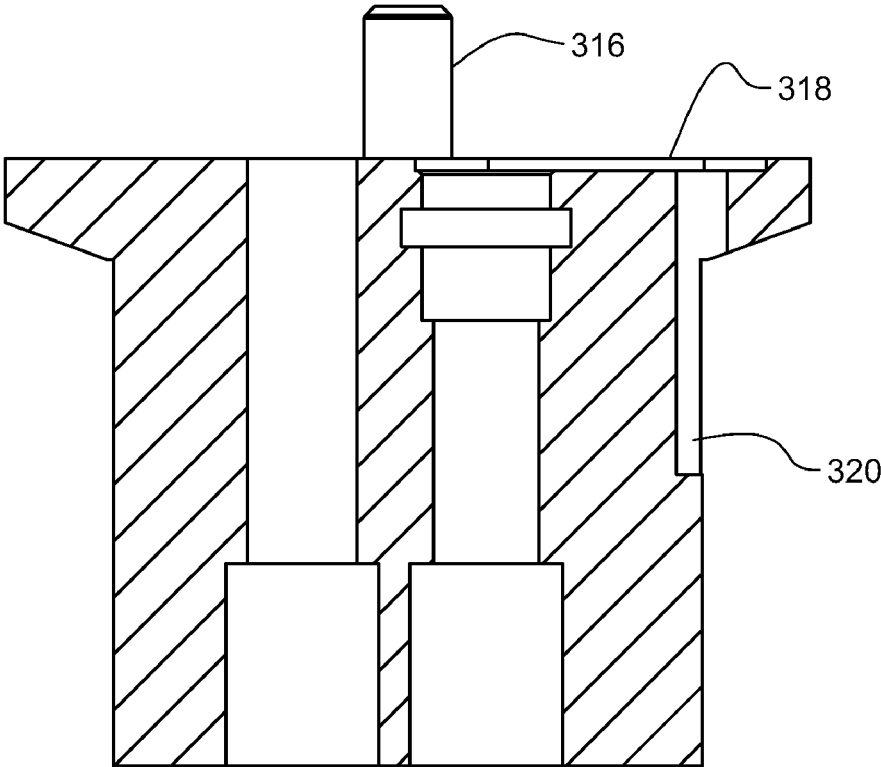
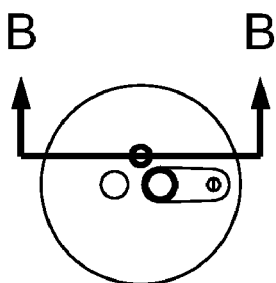


FIG.3I



310

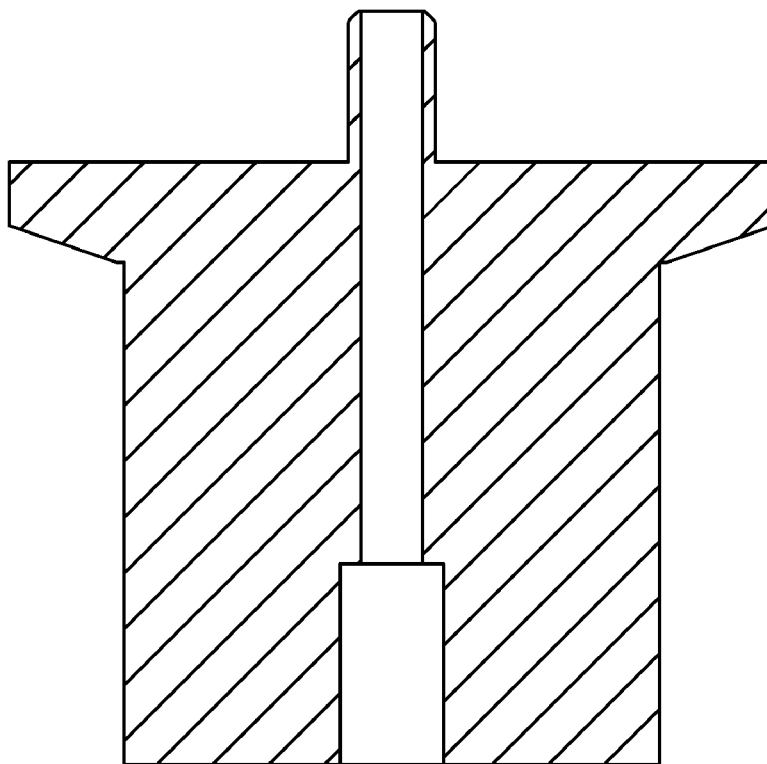


FIG.3J

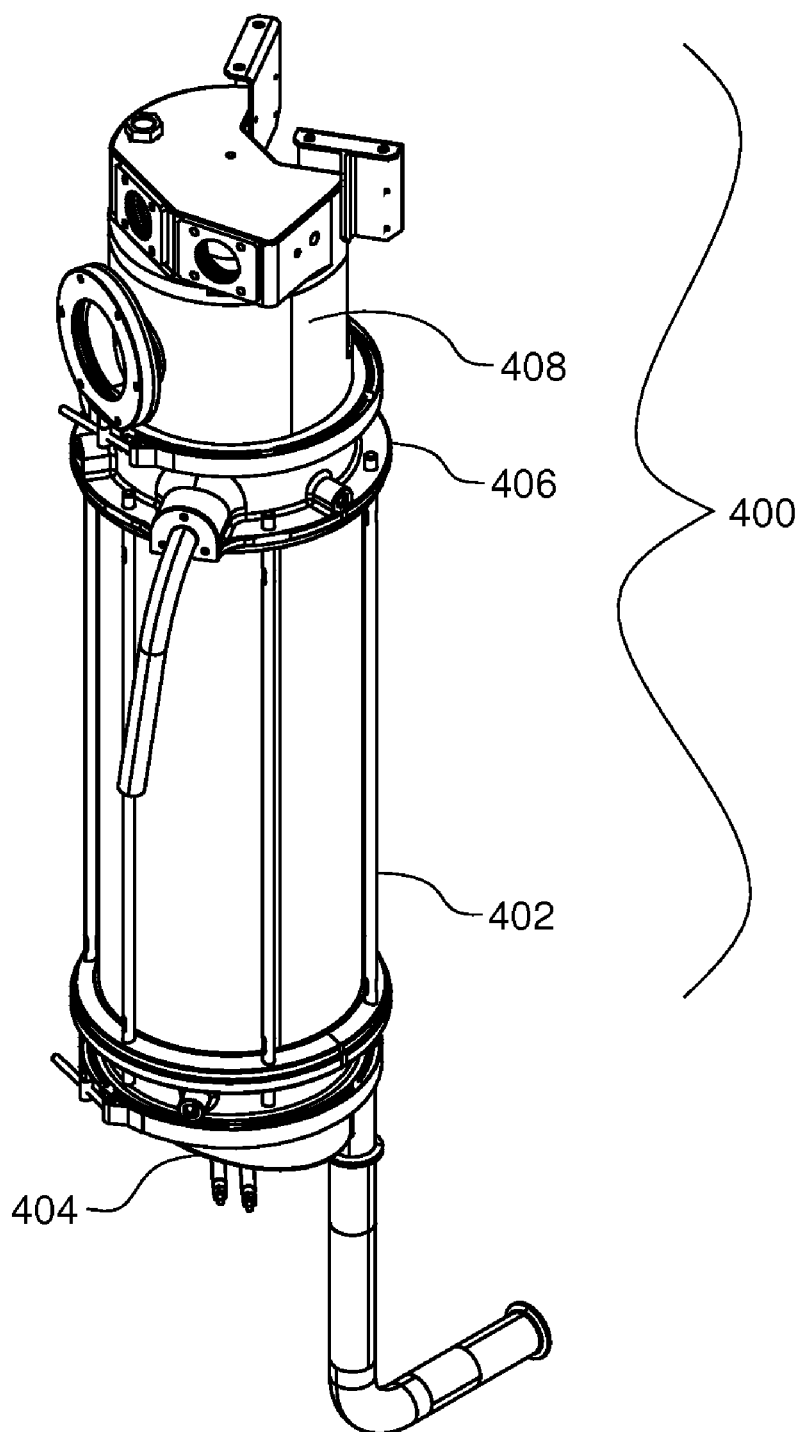


FIG.4

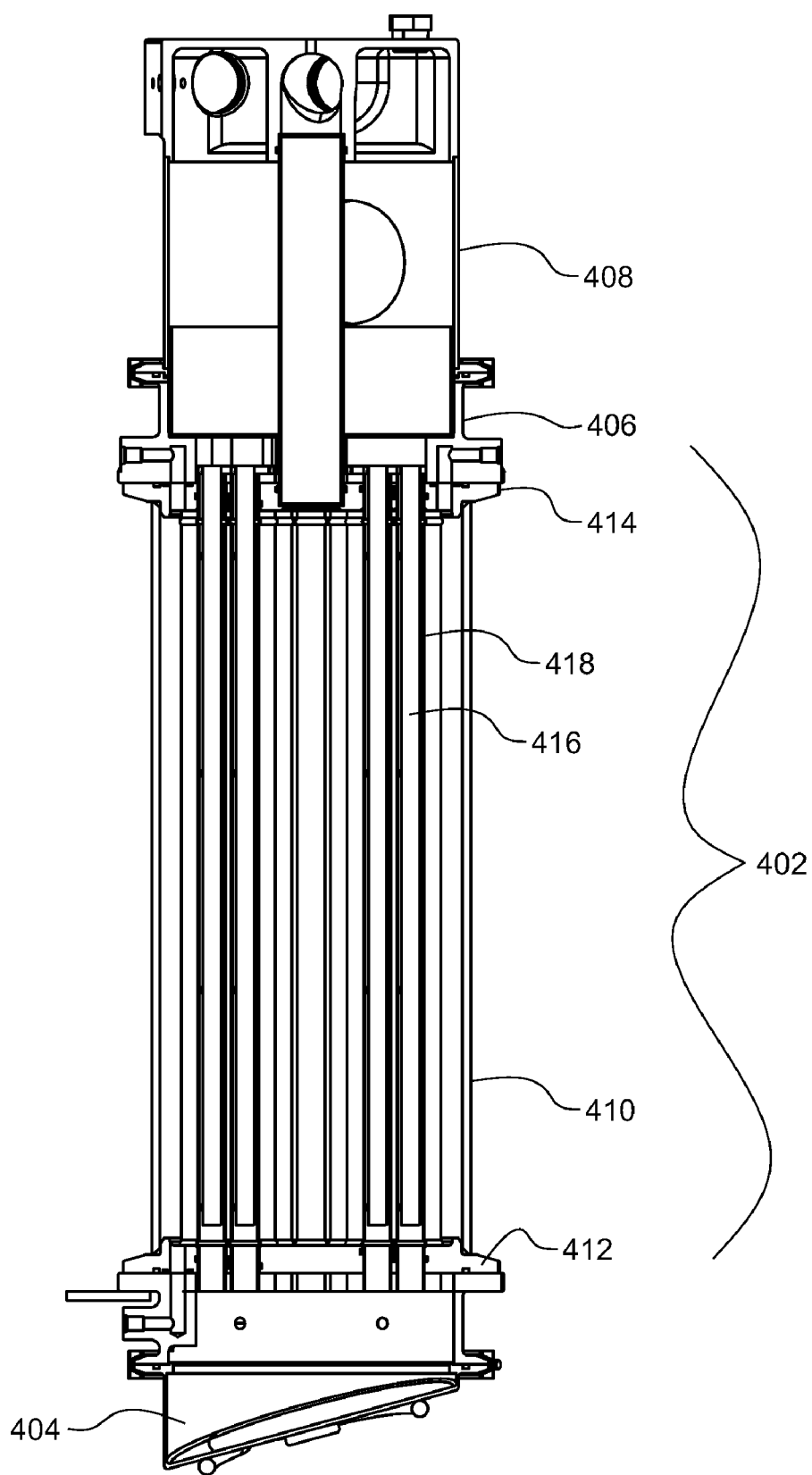


FIG.4A

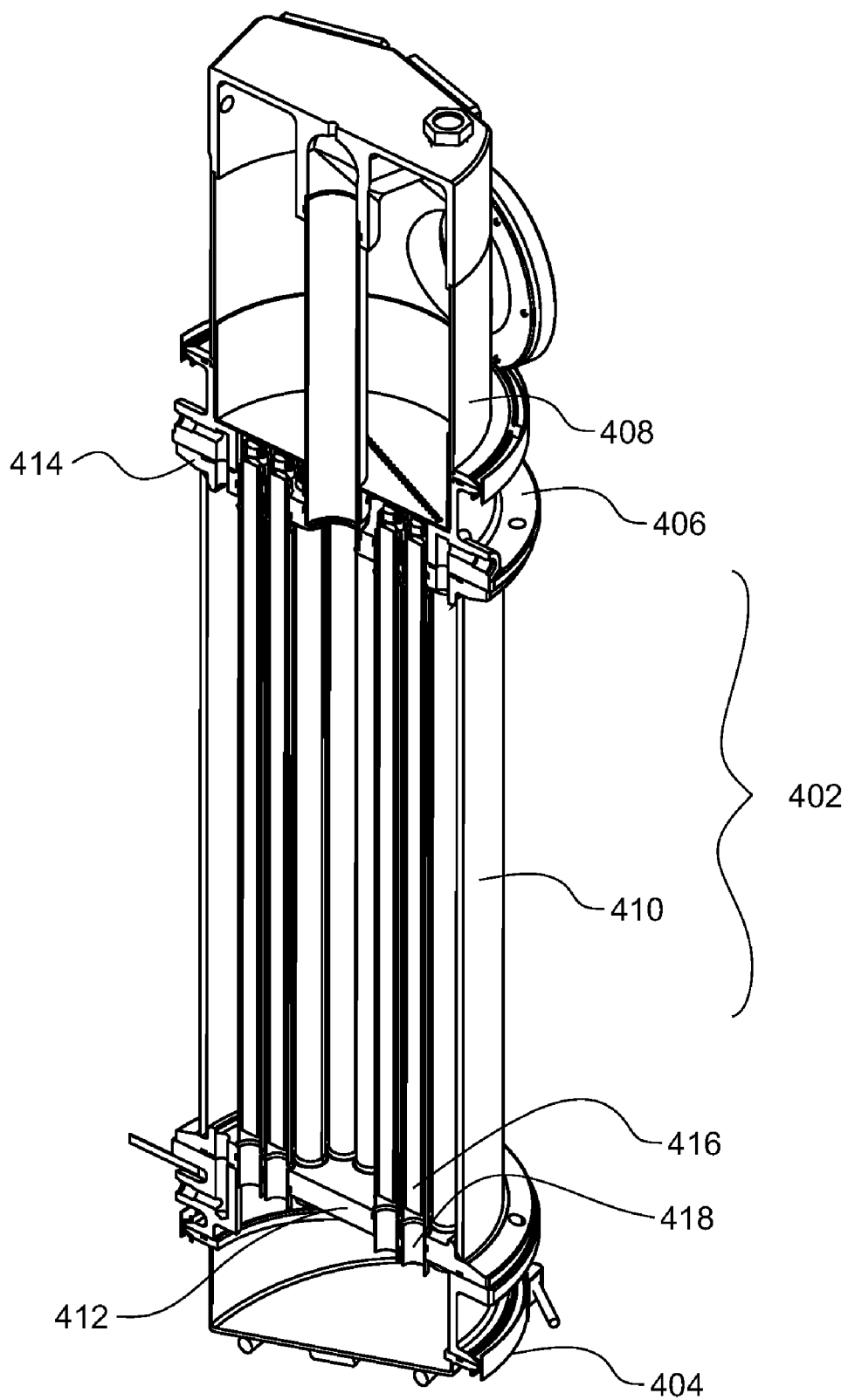


FIG.4B

420

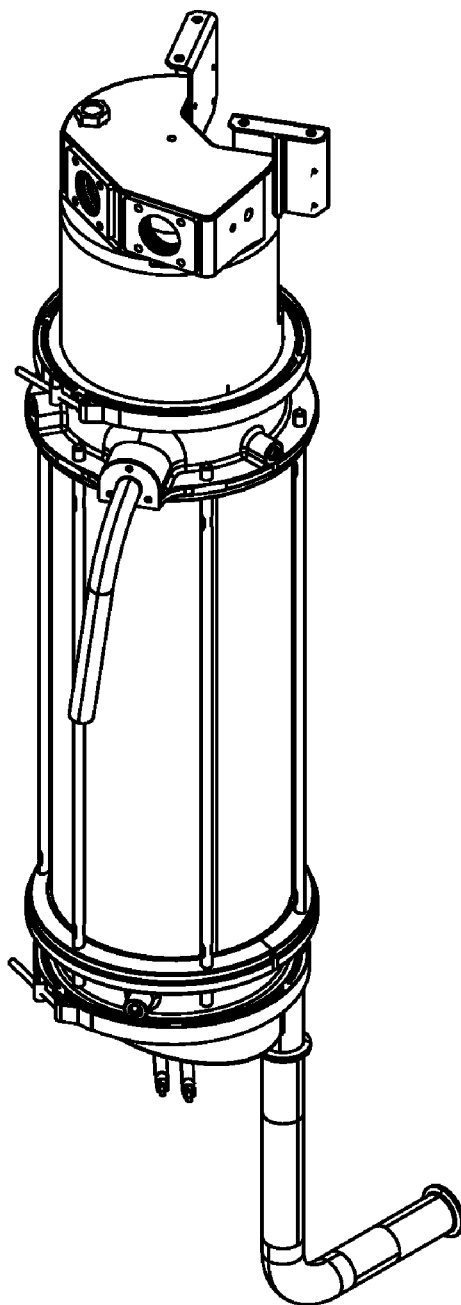


FIG.4C

500

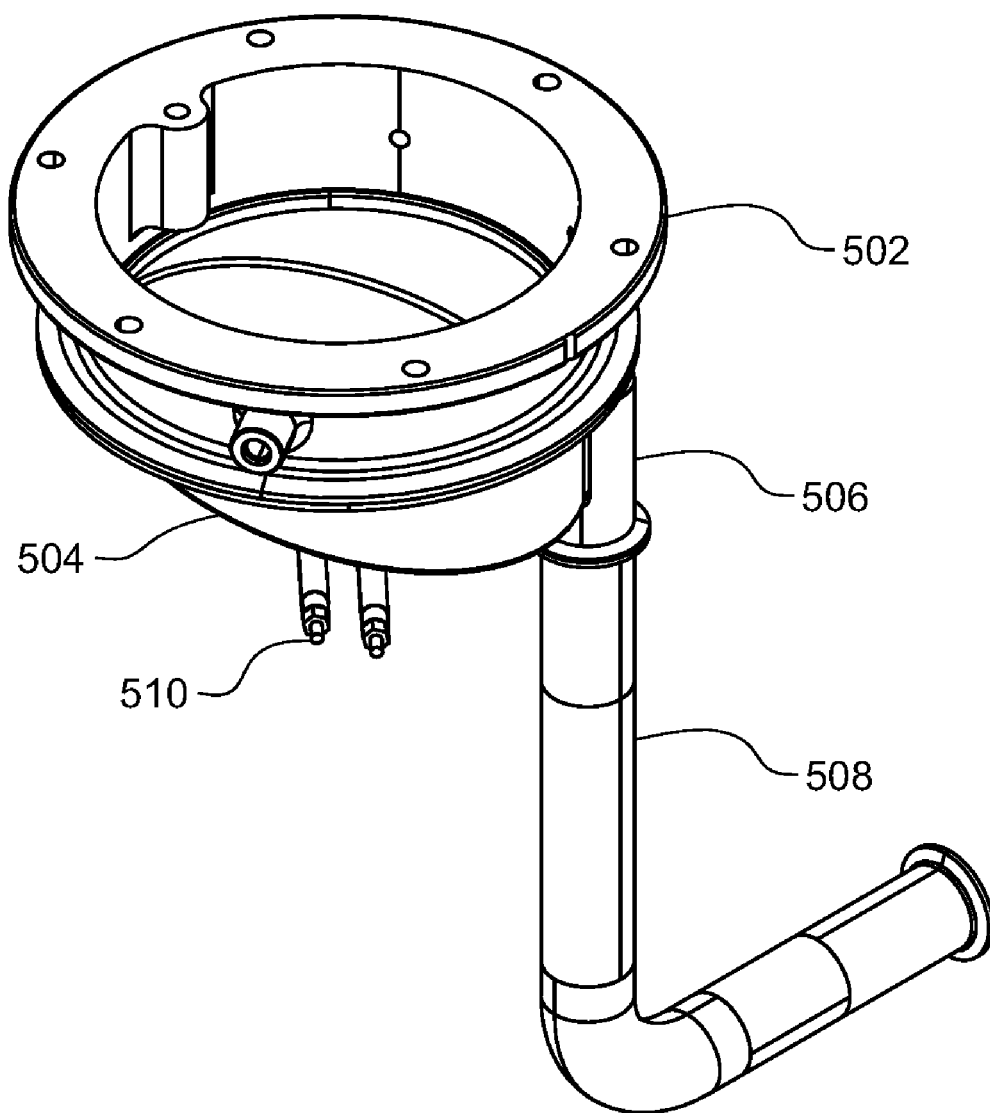


FIG.5

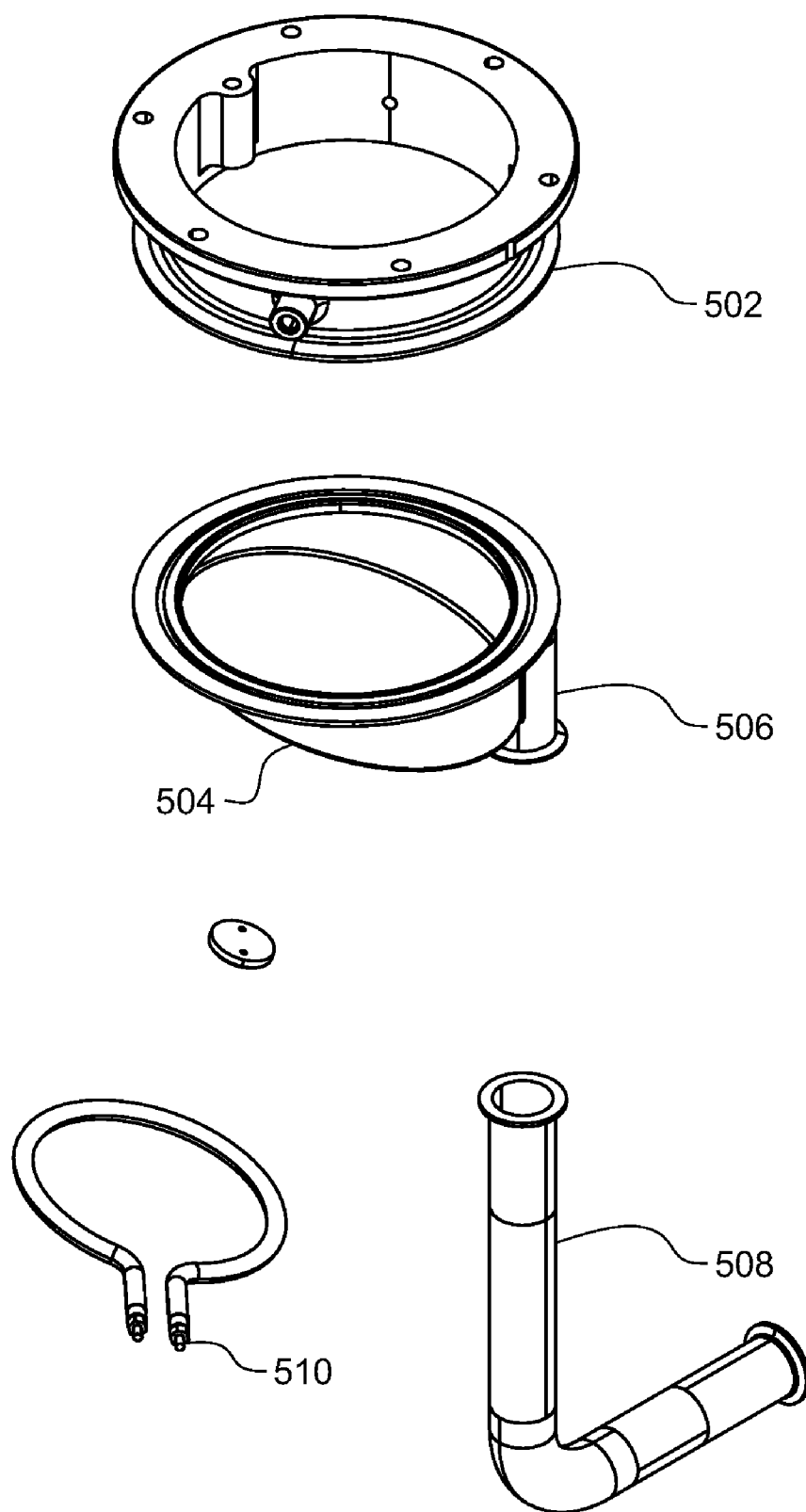


FIG.5A

600

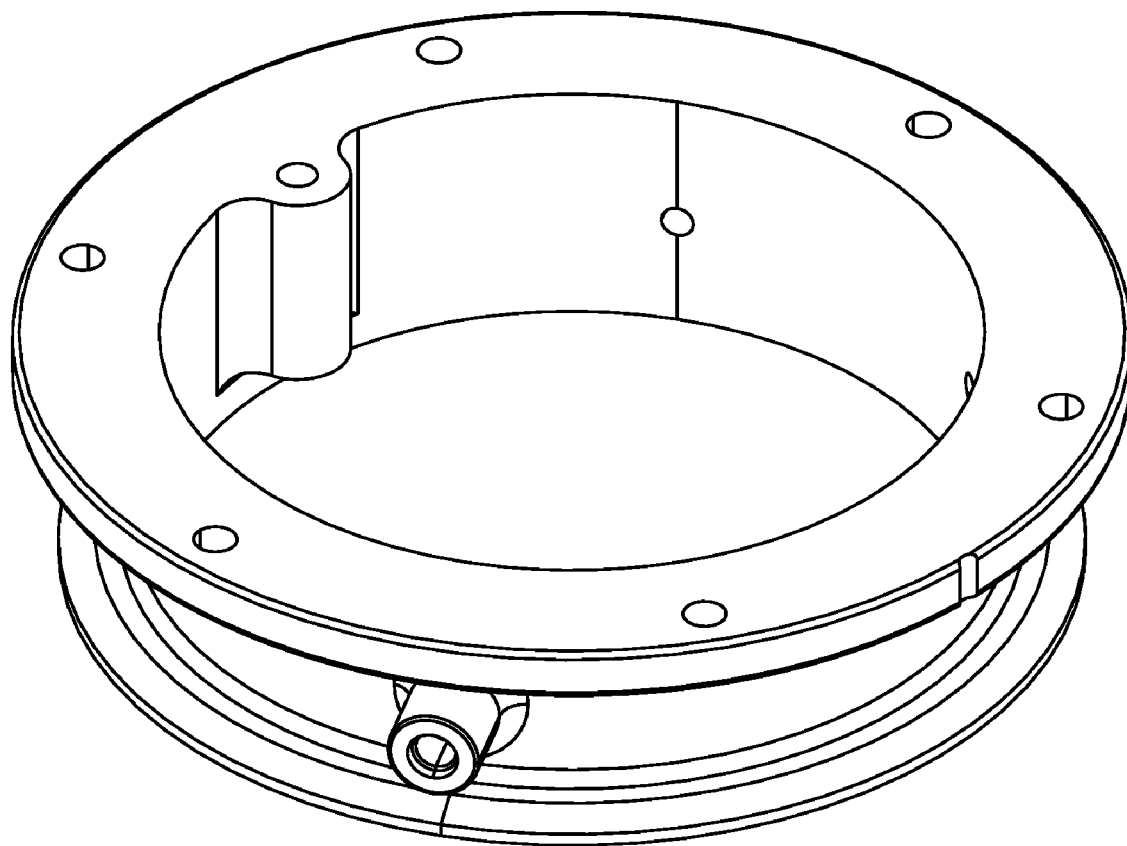


FIG.6

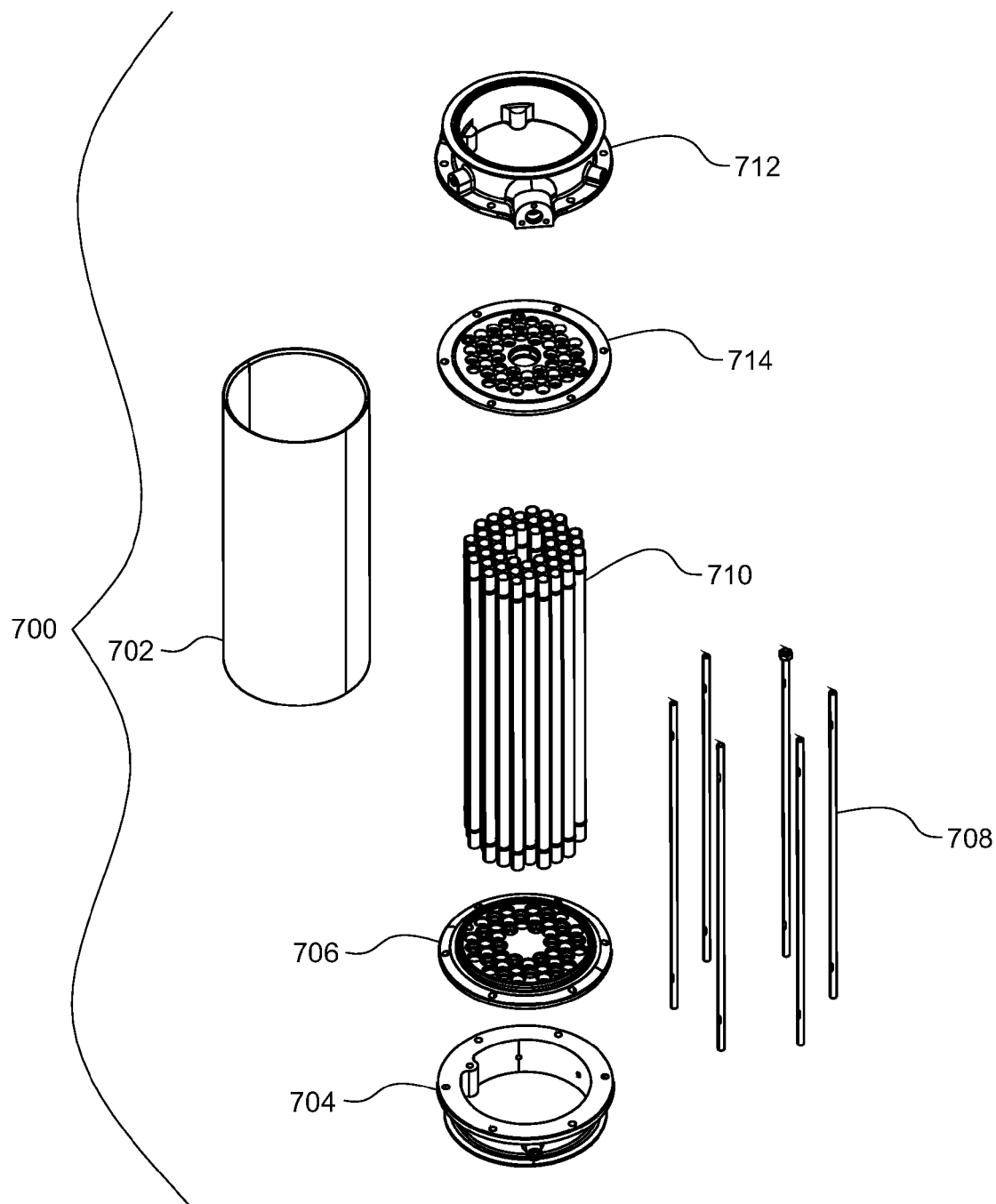


FIG.7

700

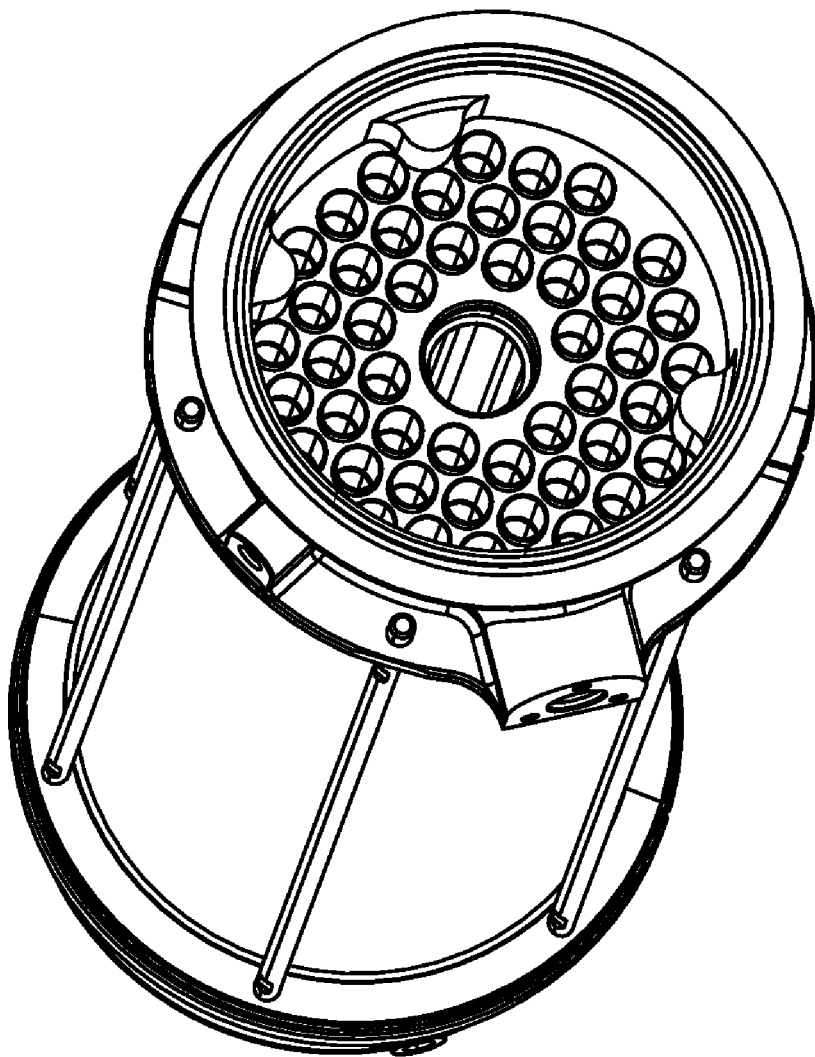


FIG.7A

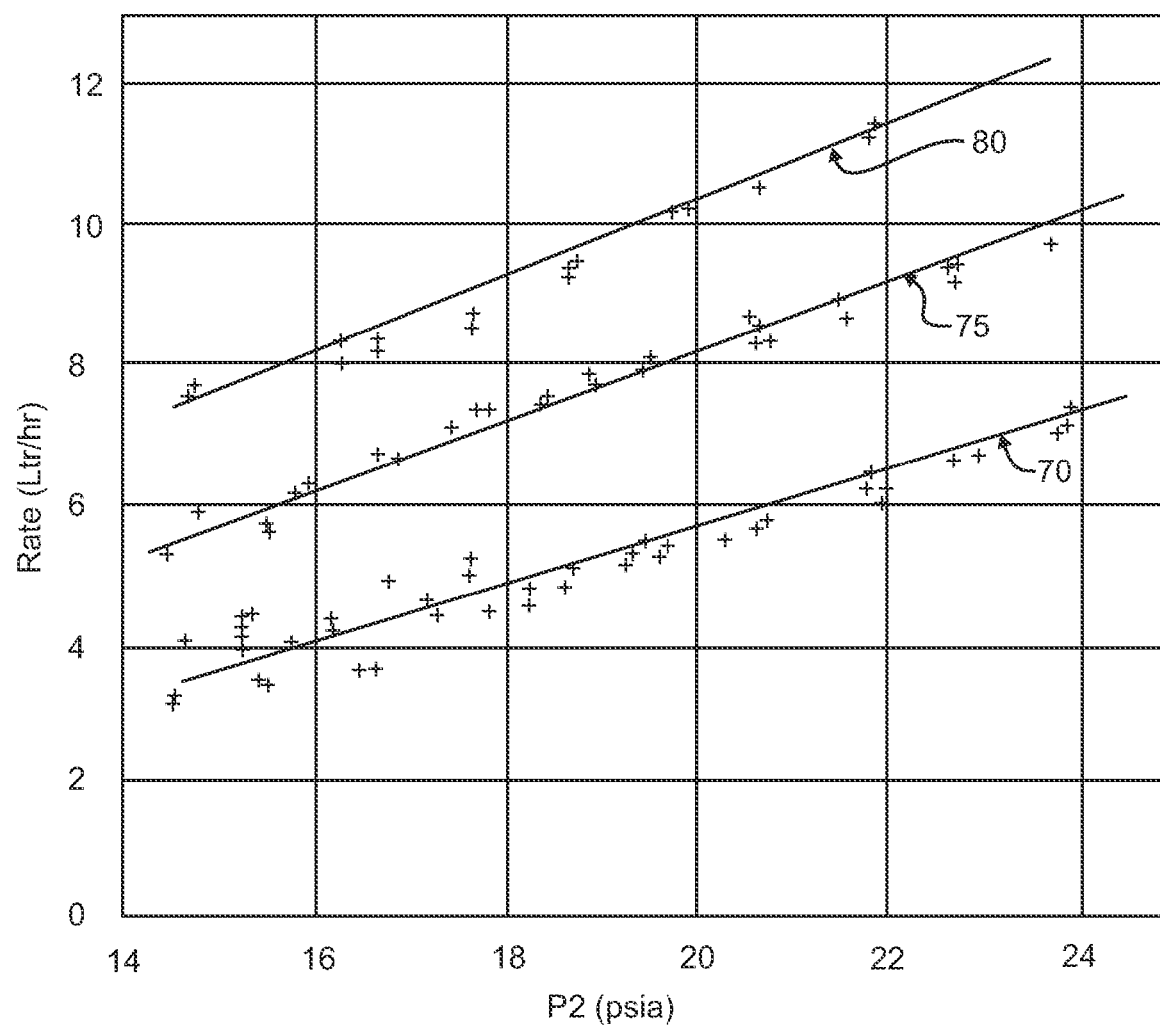


FIG. 7B

800

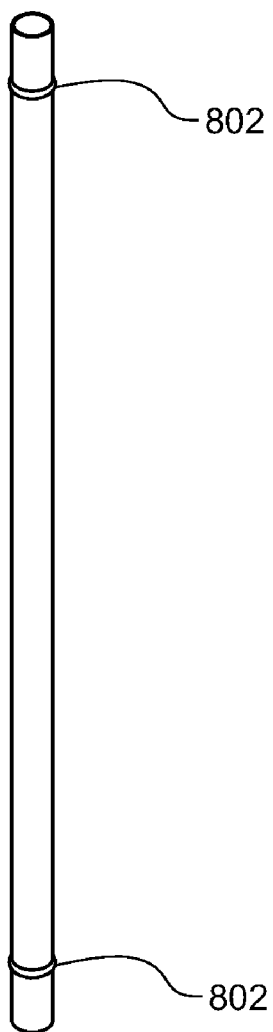


FIG.8

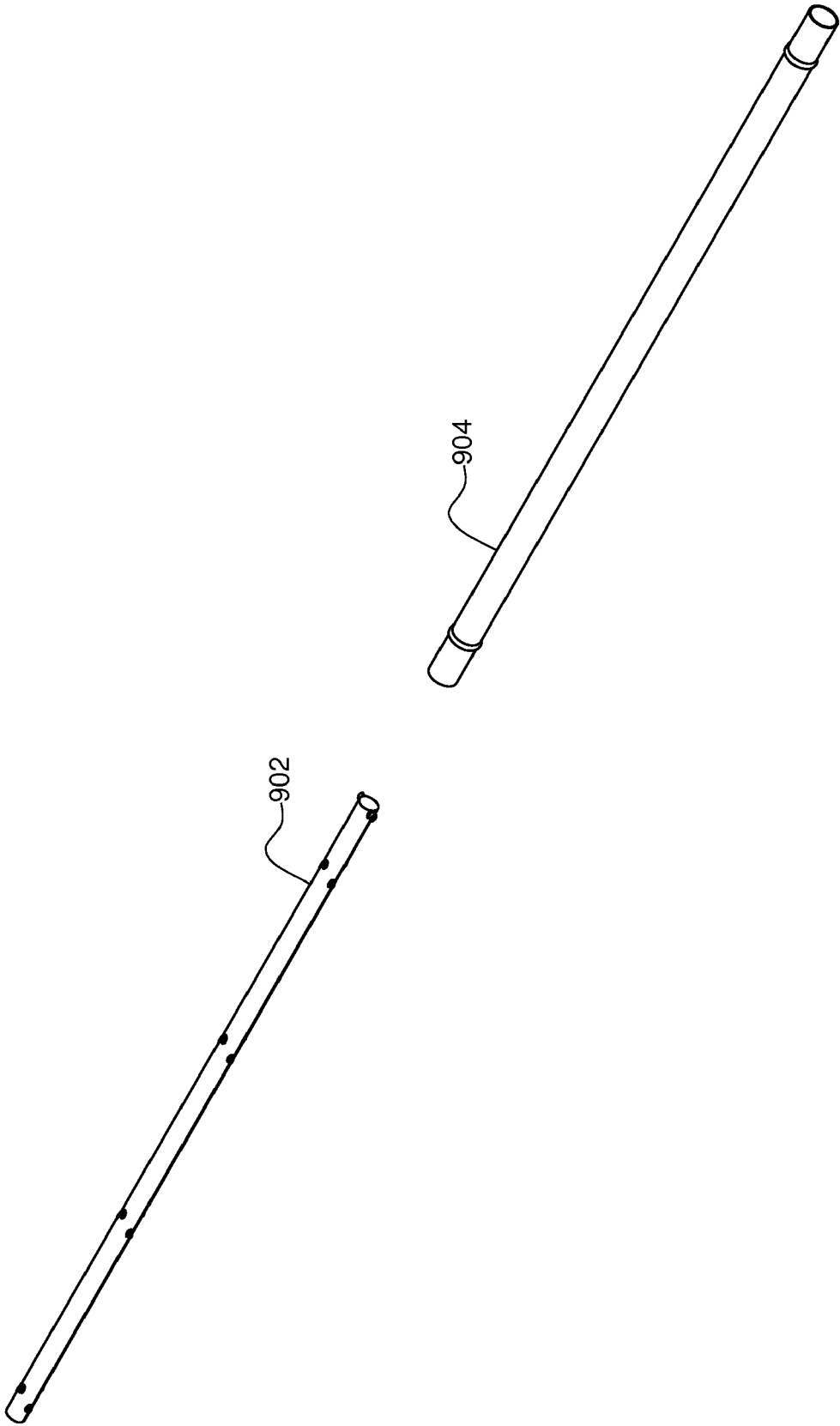


FIG. 9

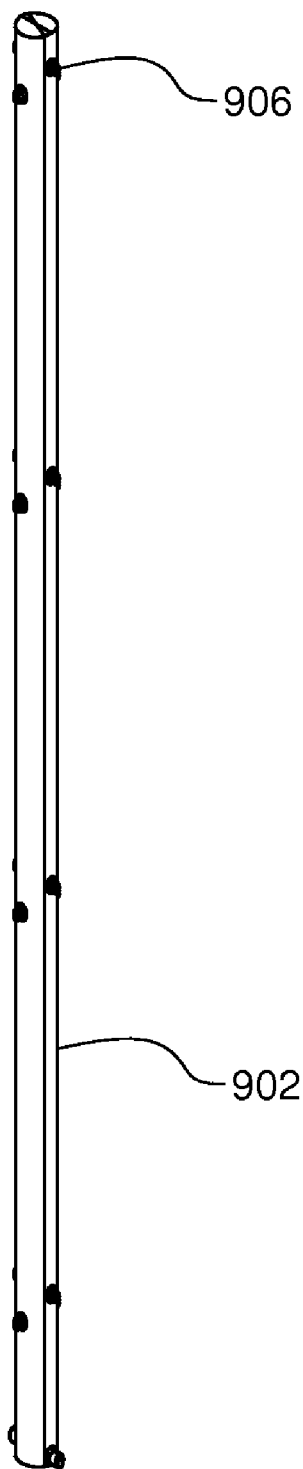


FIG.9A

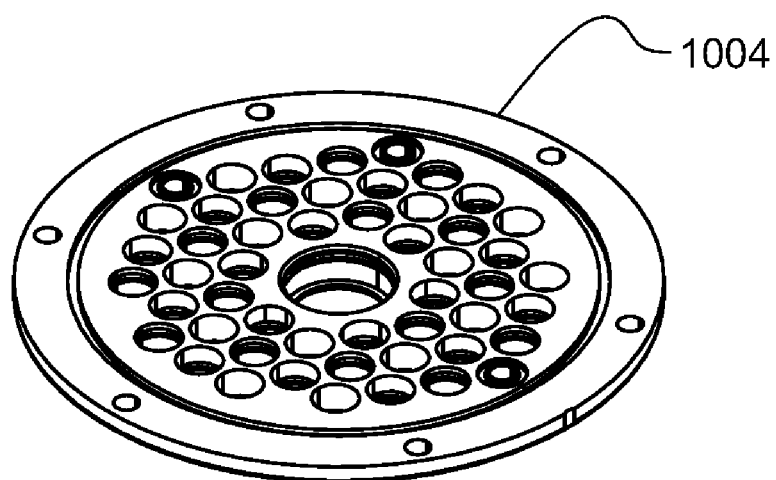


FIG. 10A

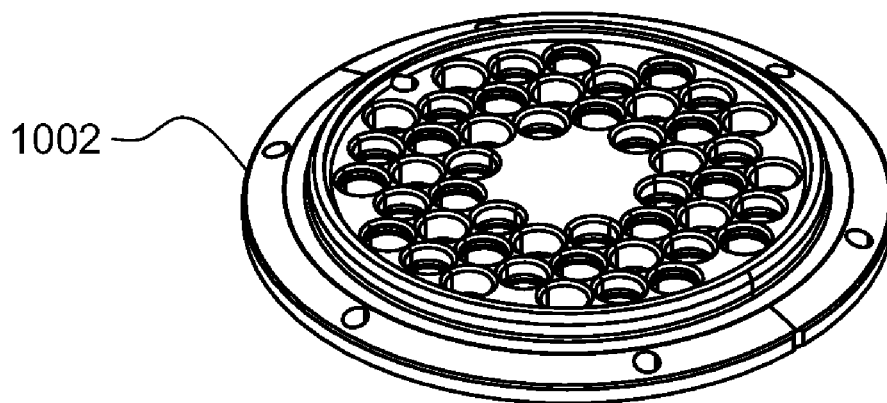


FIG. 10

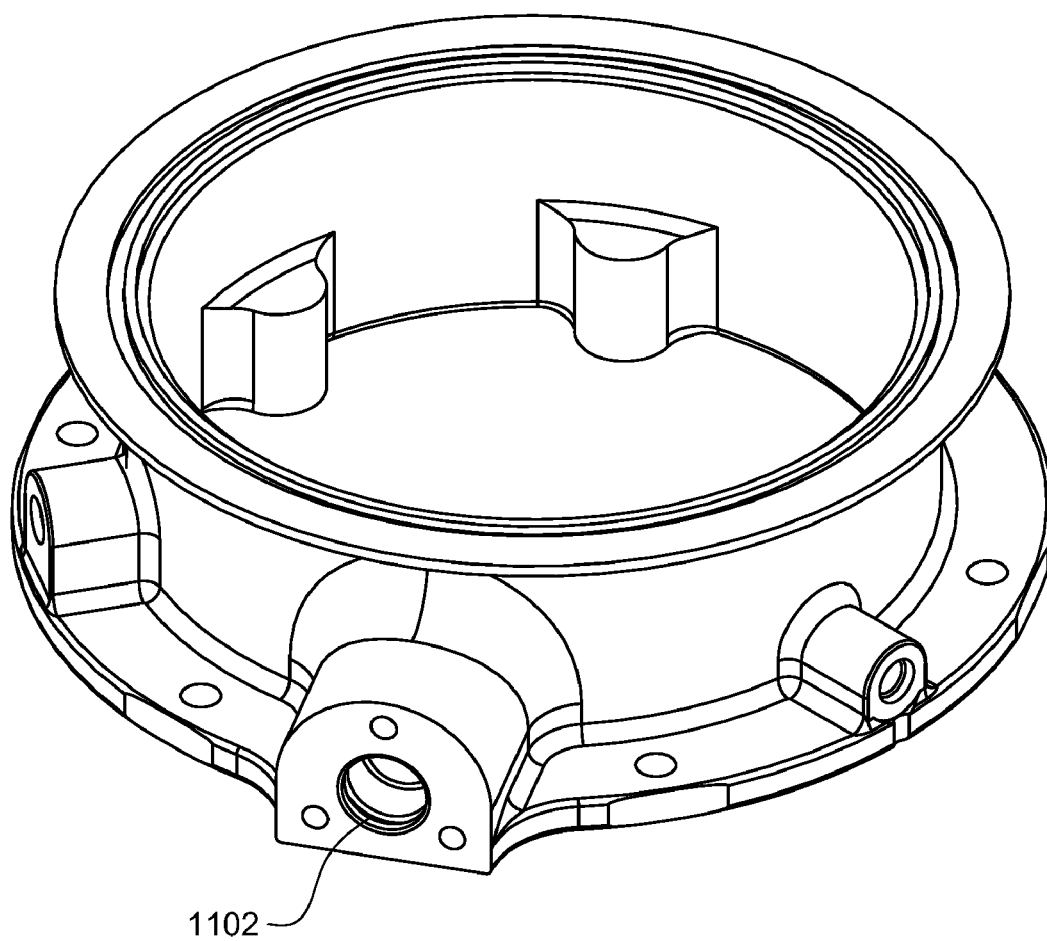
1100

FIG.11

1200

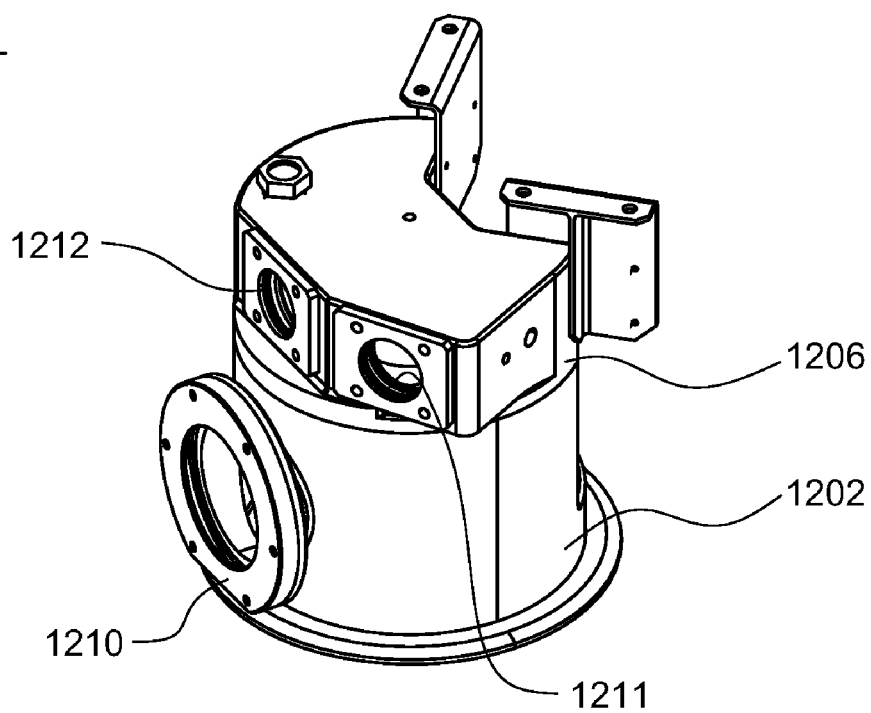


FIG. 12A

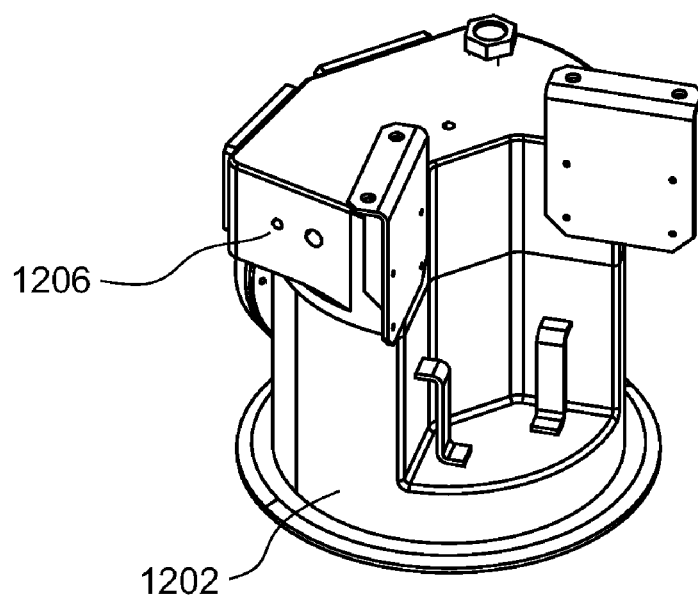


FIG. 12

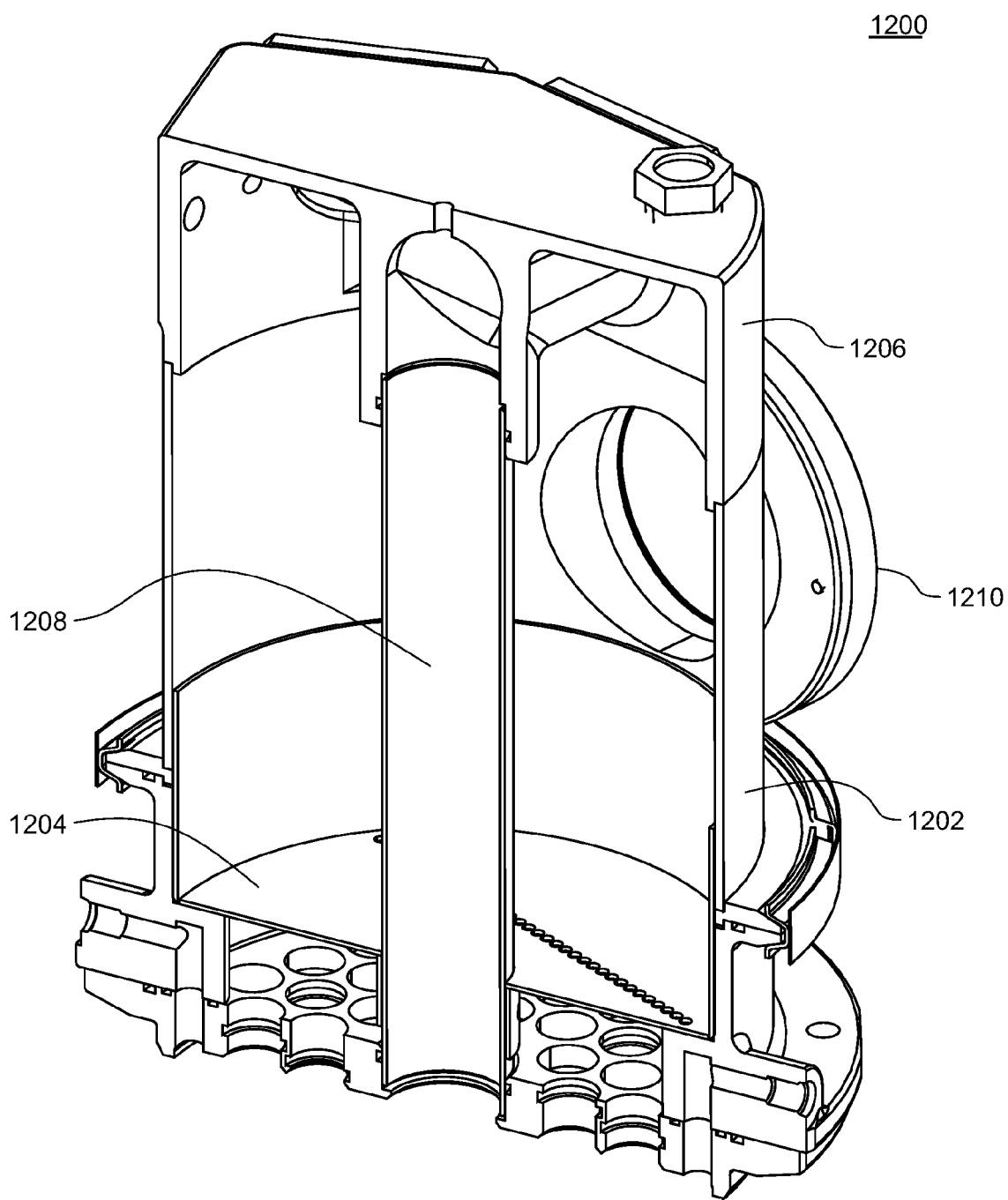


FIG. 12B

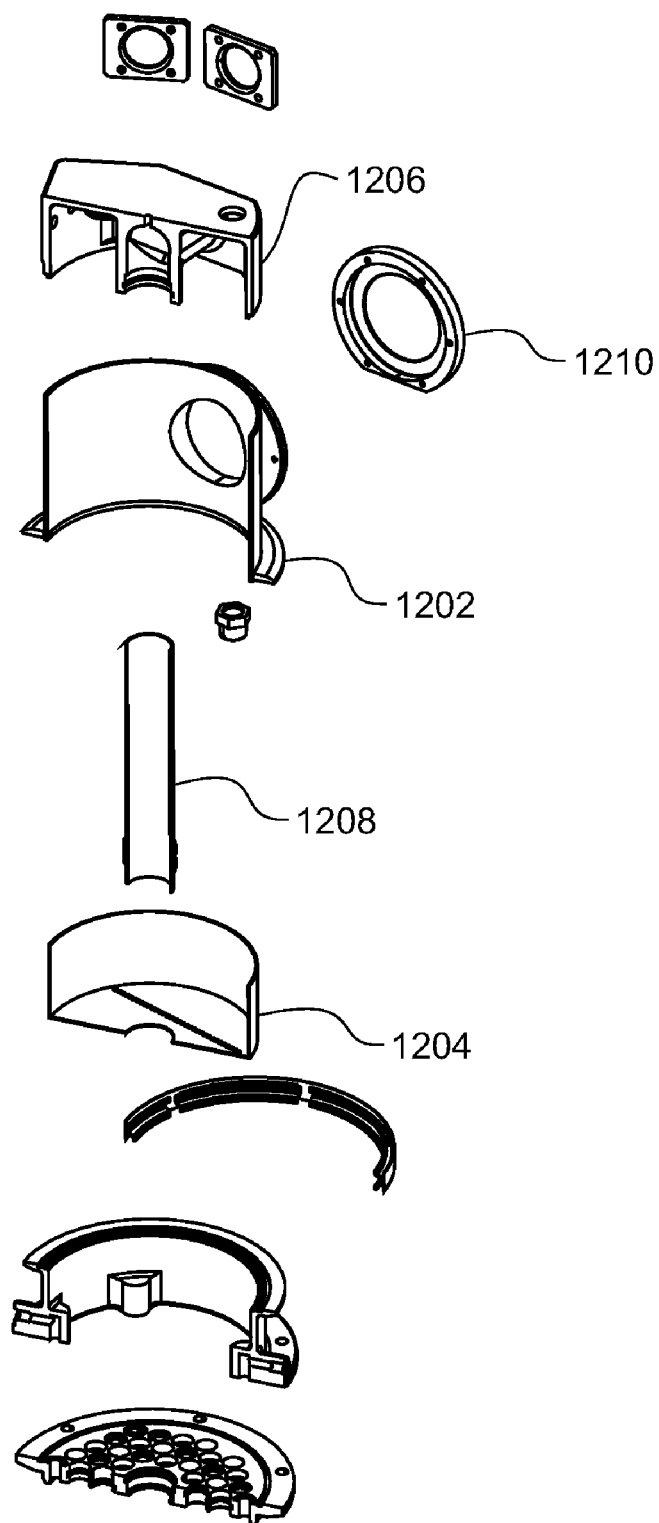


FIG.12C

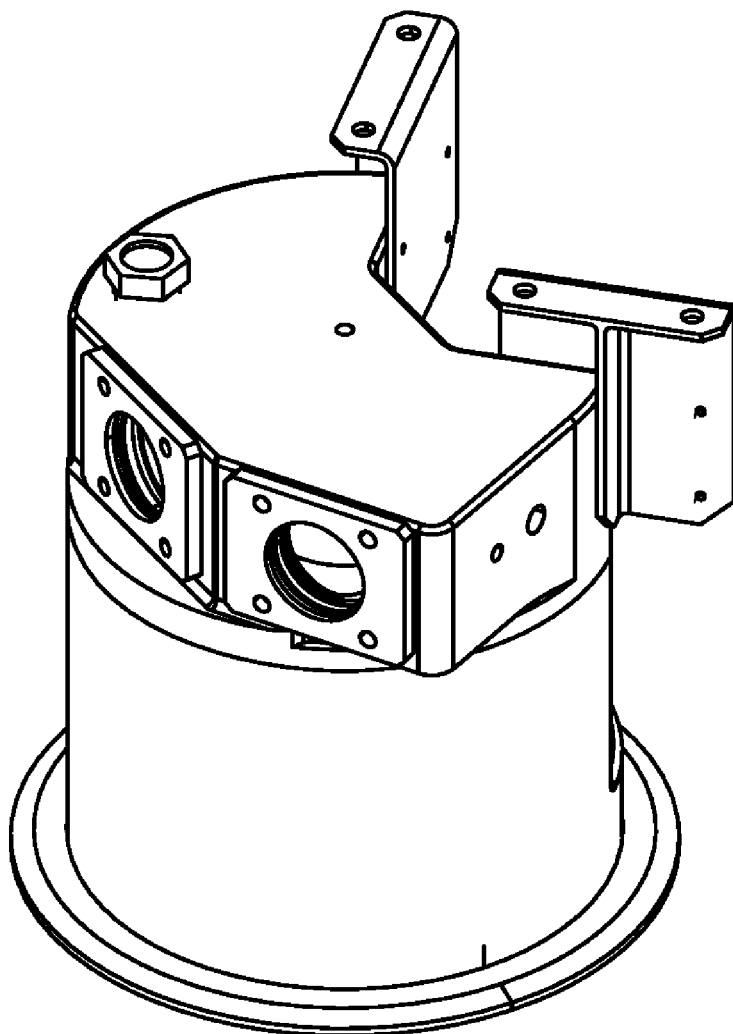


FIG.12D

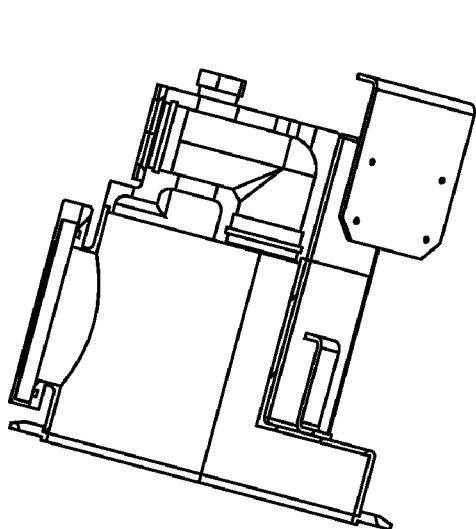
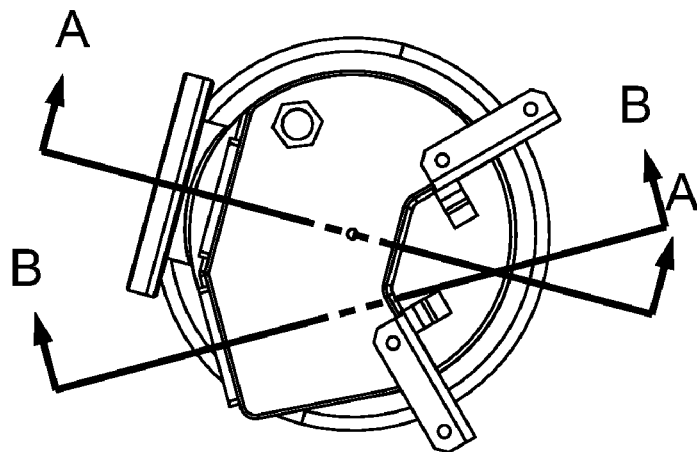


FIG. 12E

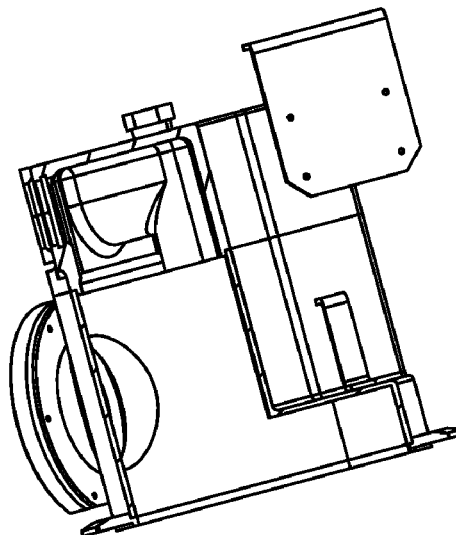


FIG. 12F

1300

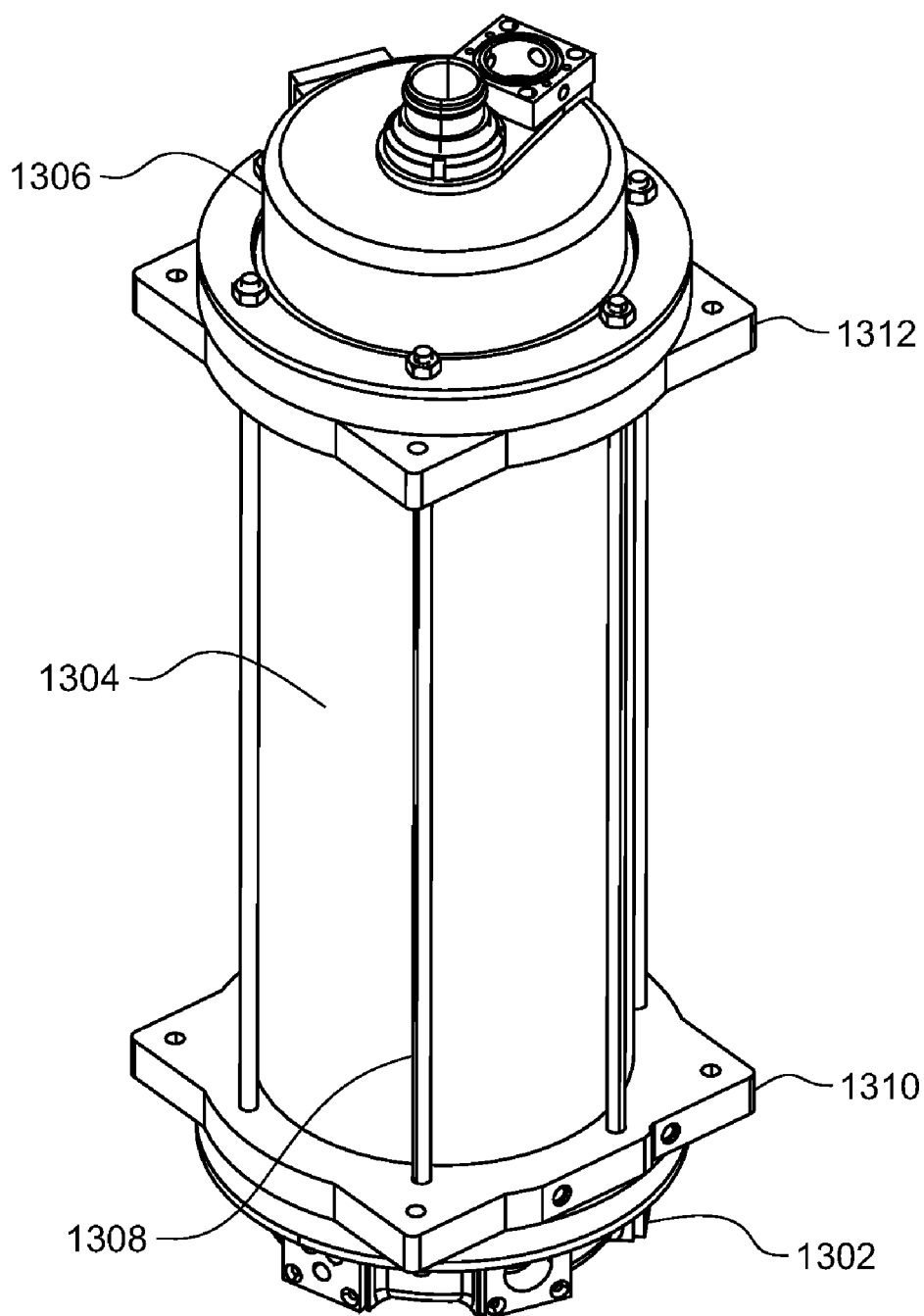


FIG.13

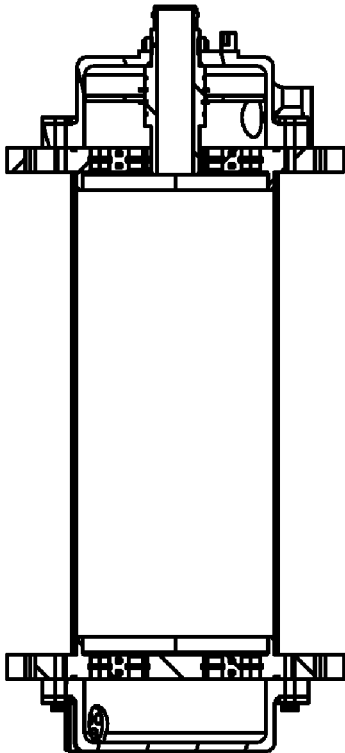
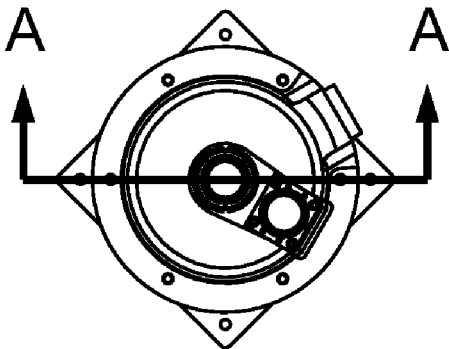


FIG. 13A

1300

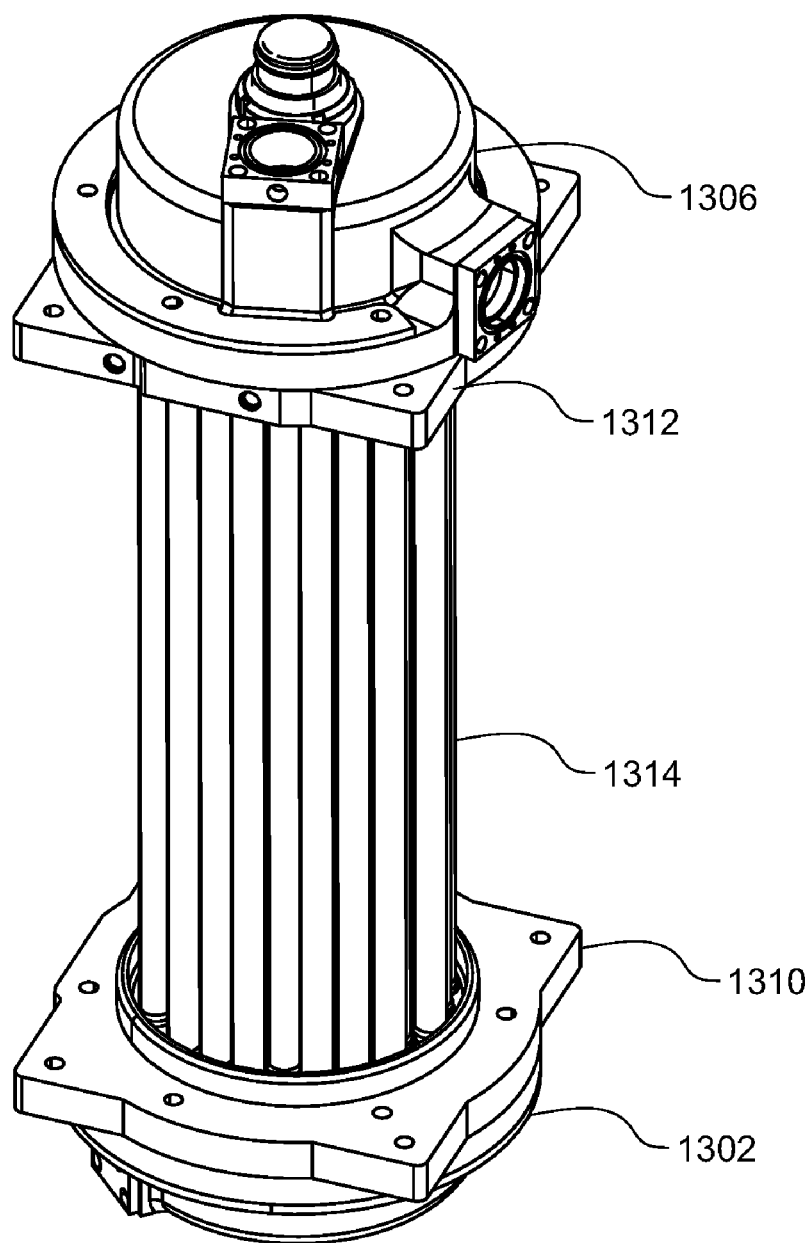


FIG.13B

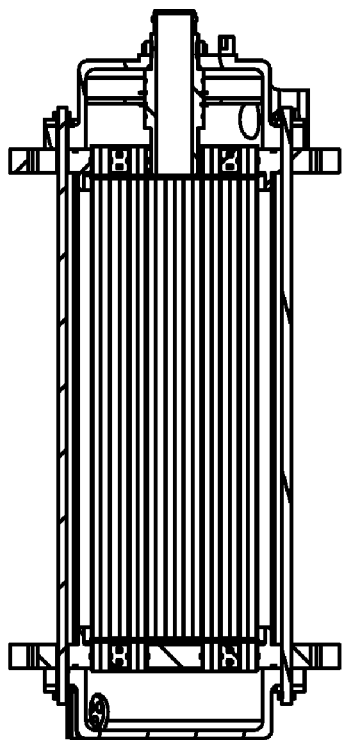
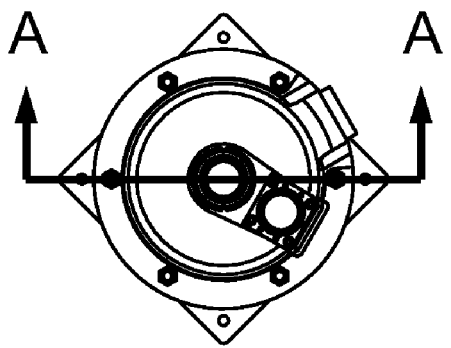


FIG.13C

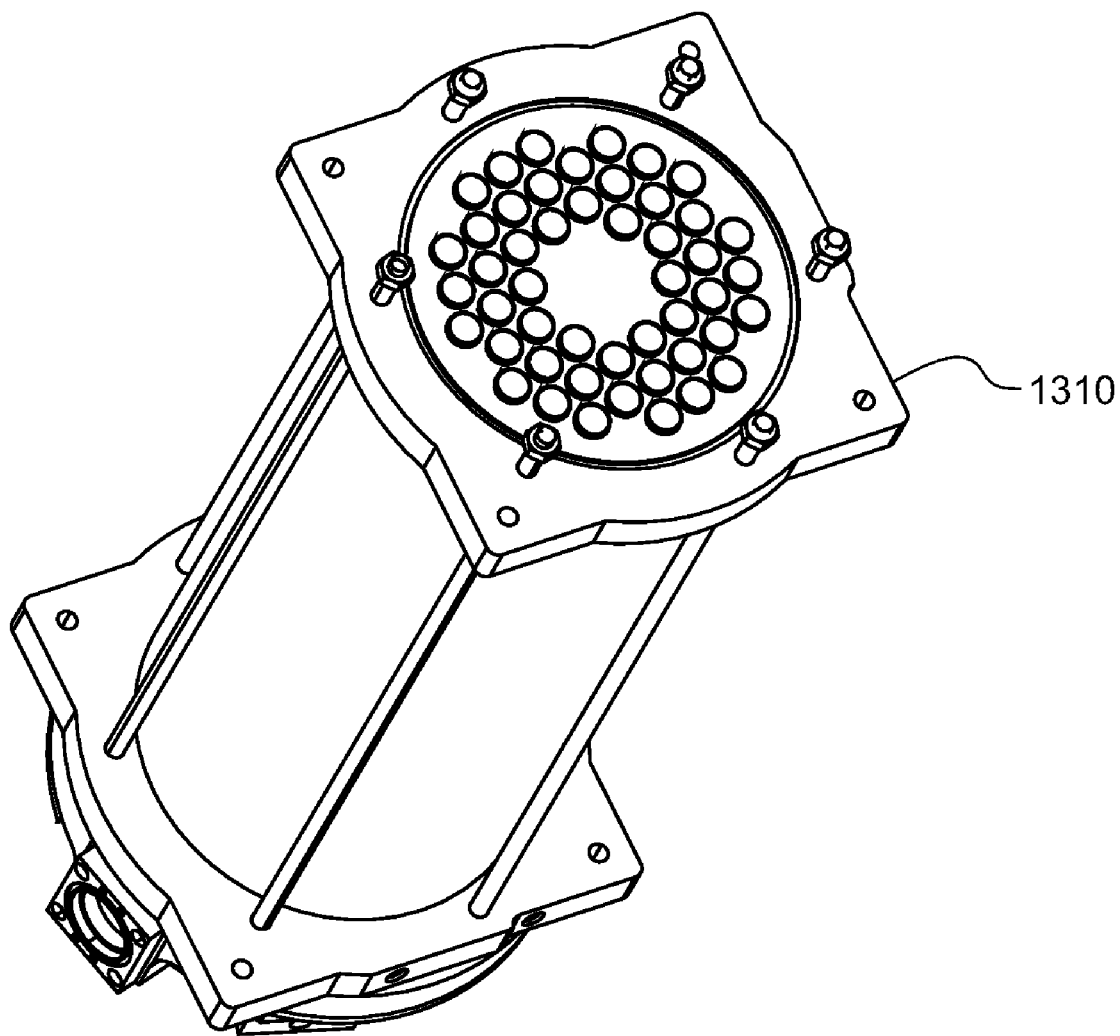


FIG.13D

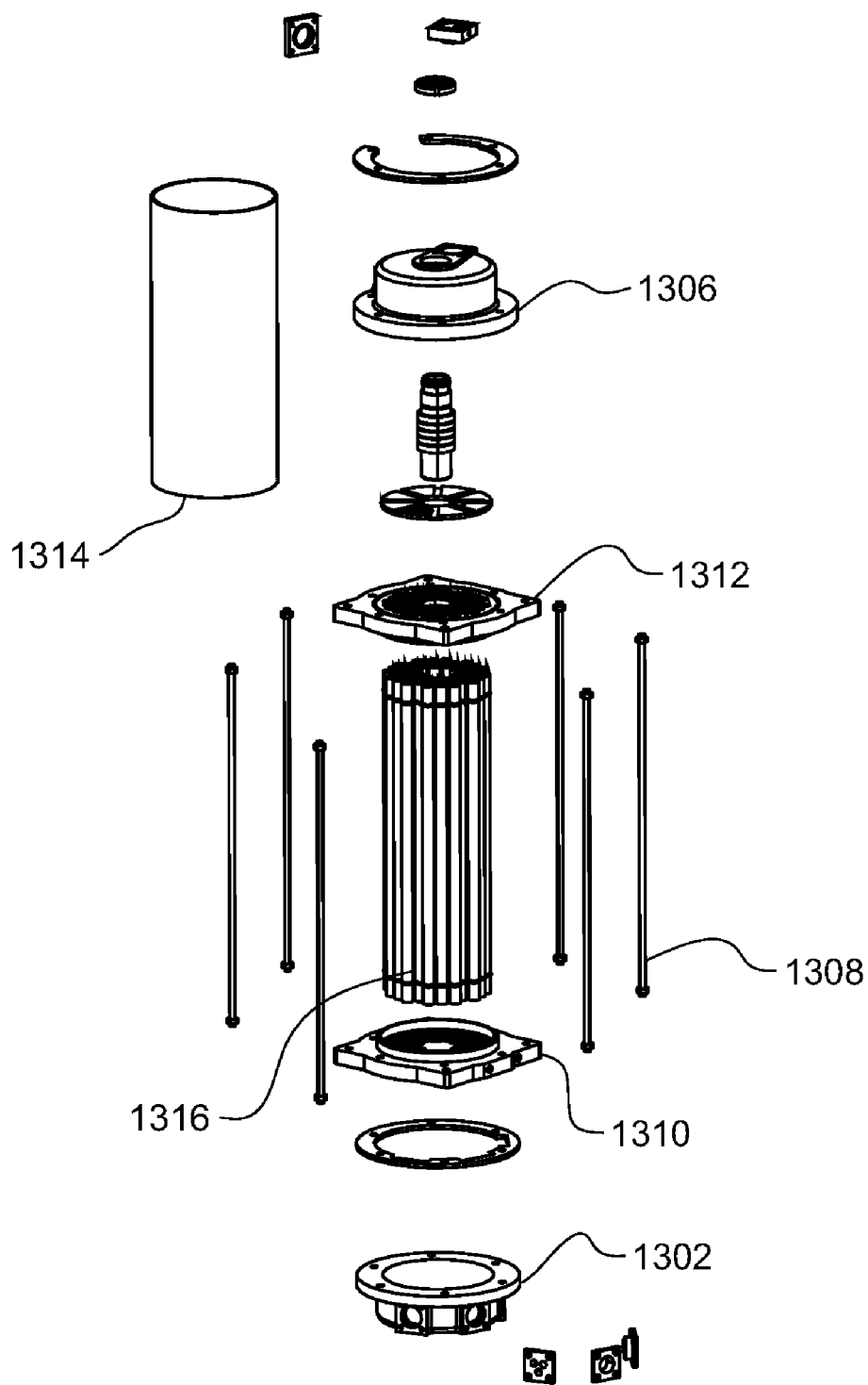


FIG.13E

1400

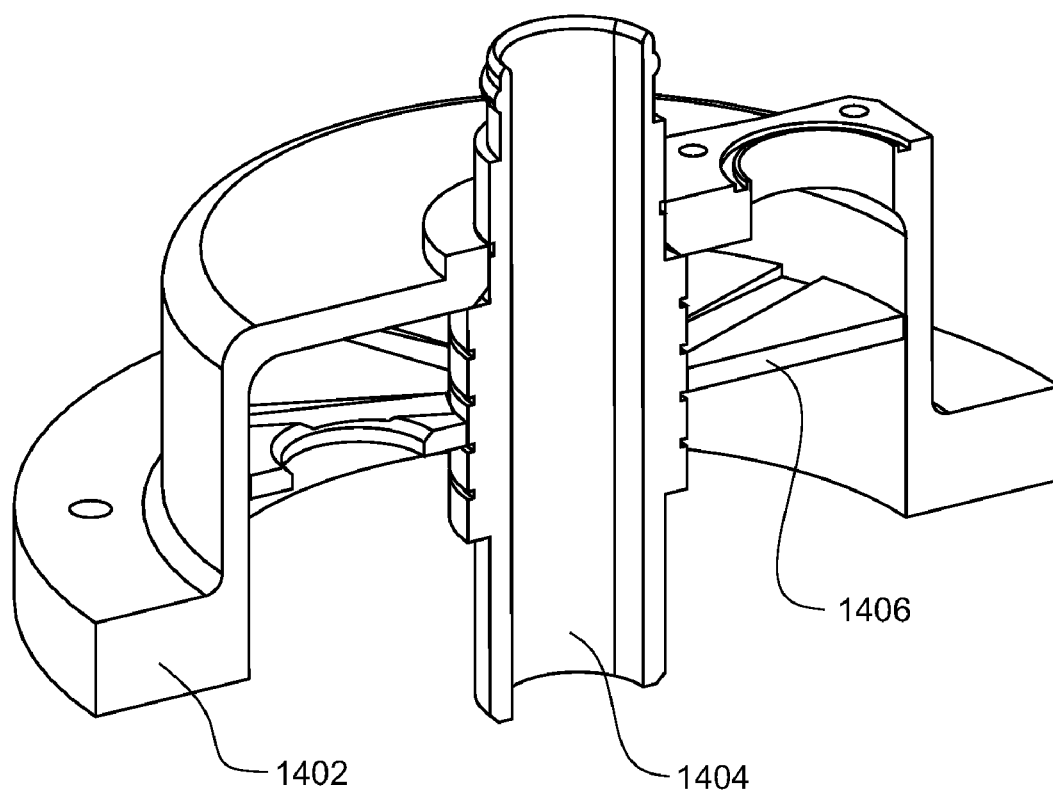


FIG.14

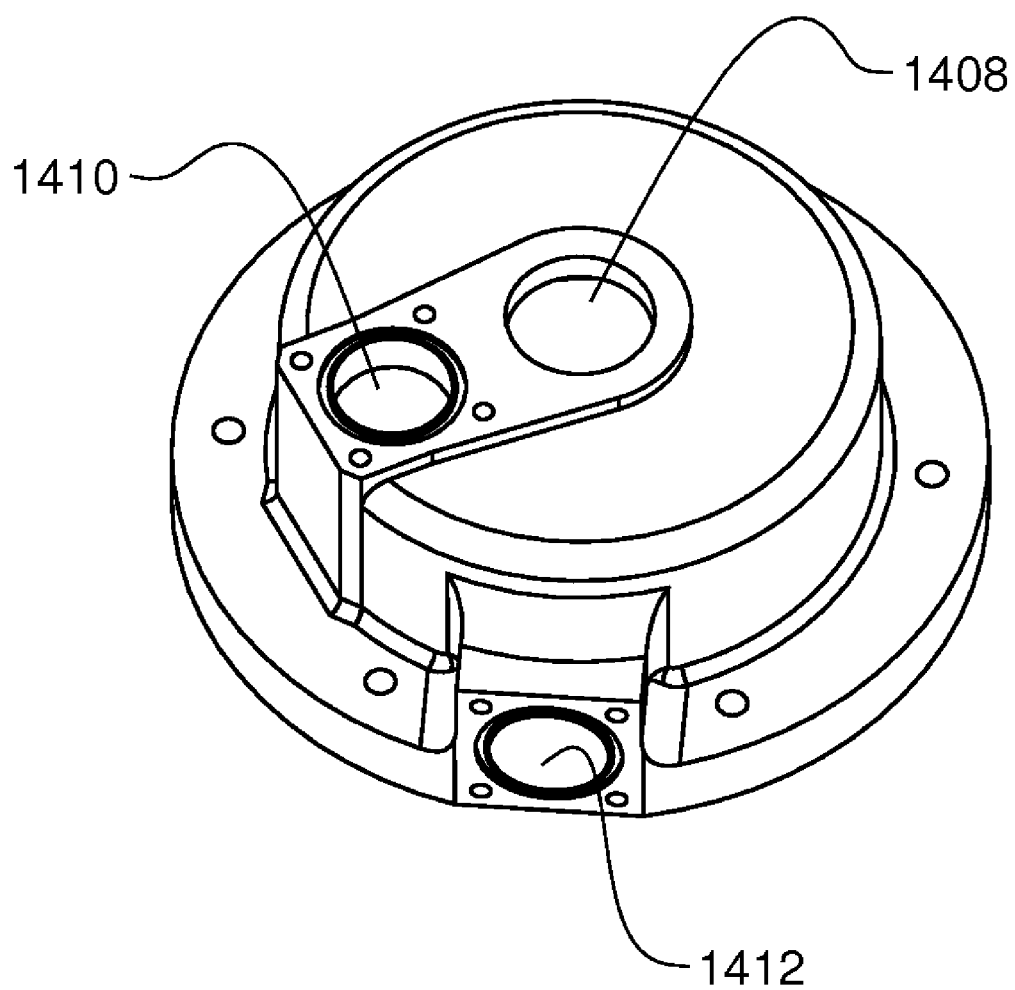


FIG.14A

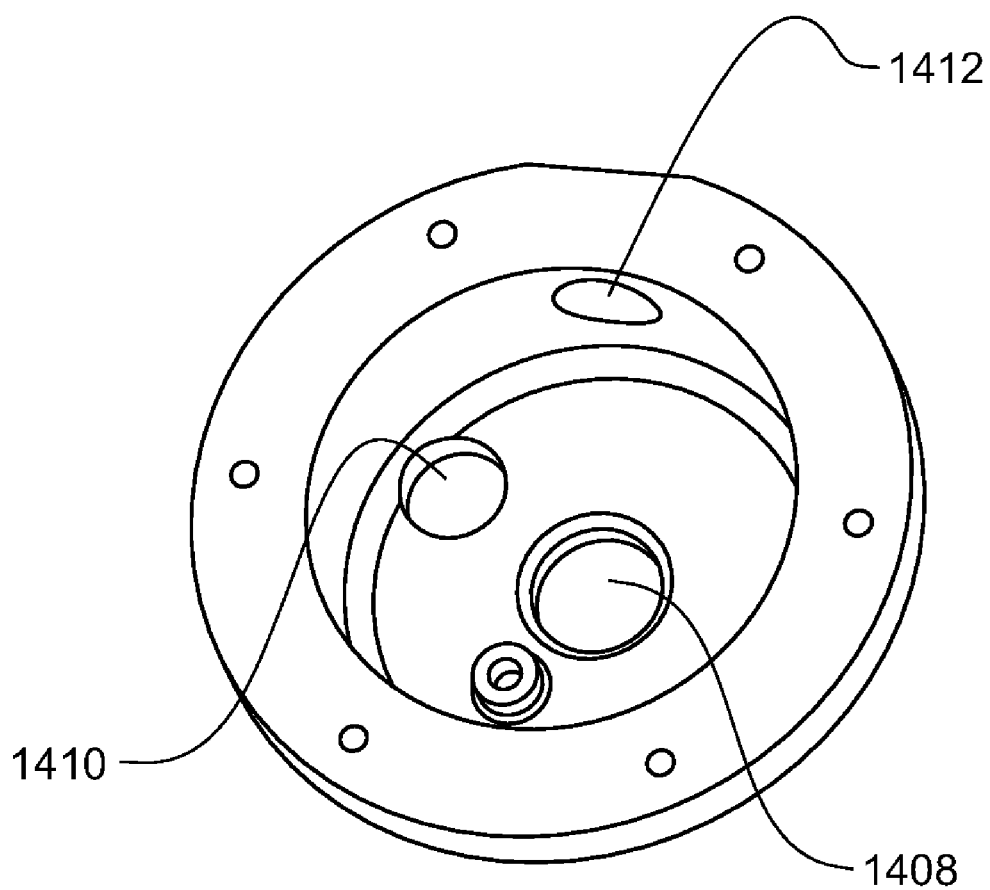


FIG.14B

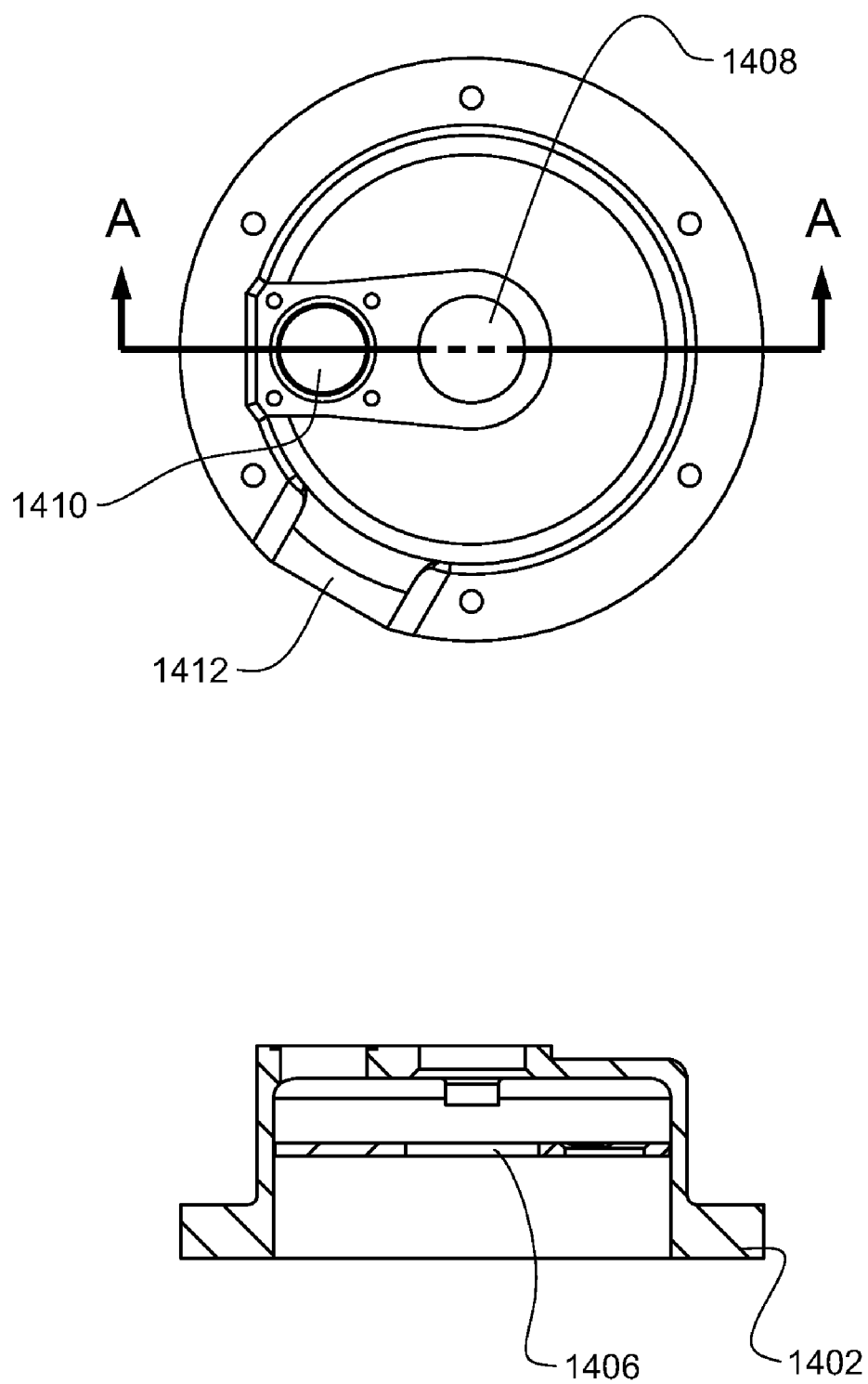


FIG.14C

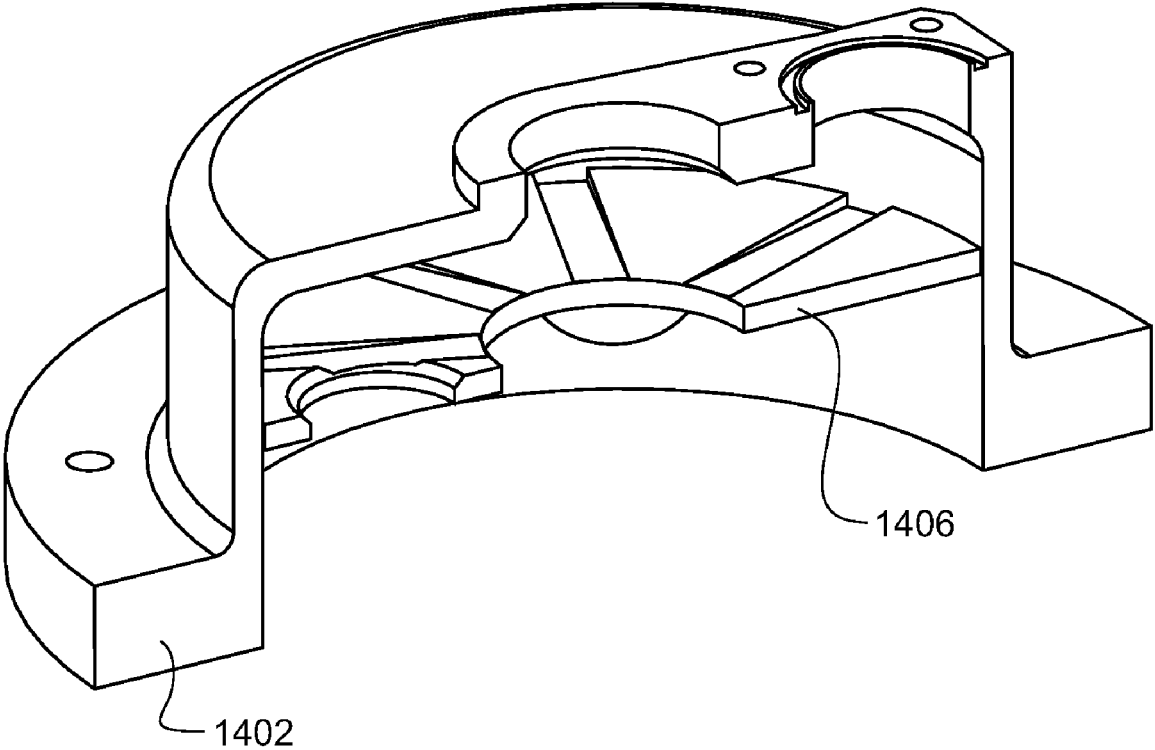


FIG.14D

1500

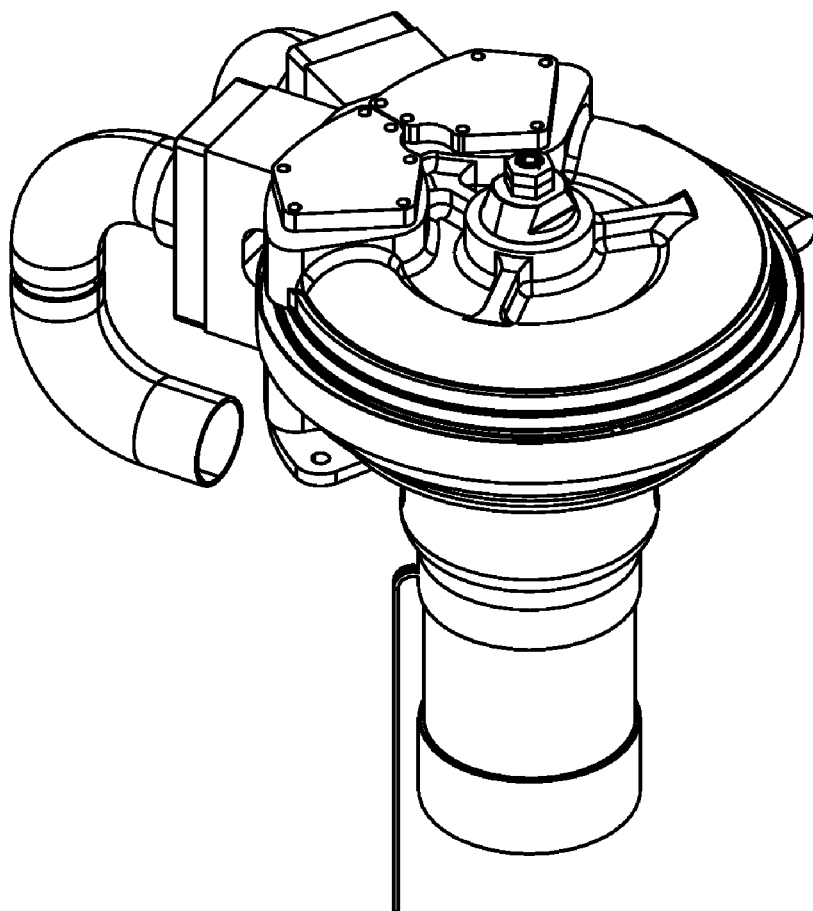


FIG.15

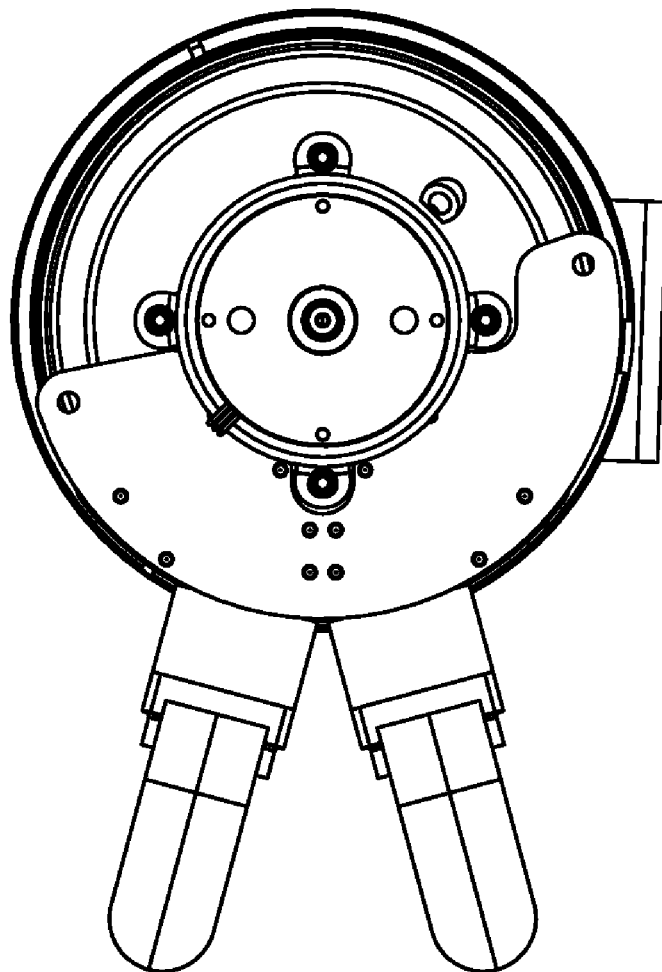


FIG.15A

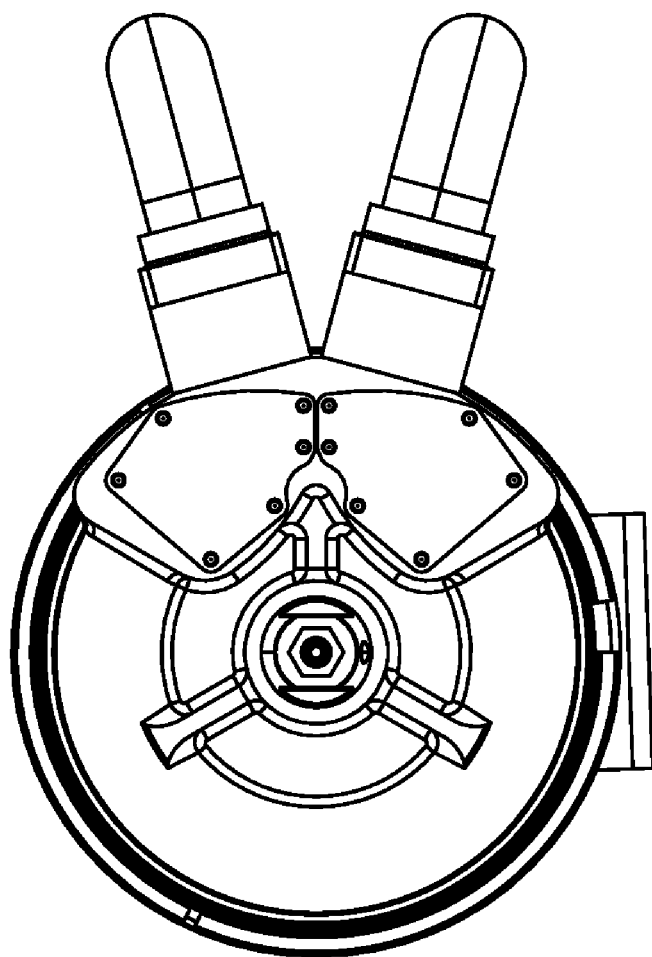


FIG.15B

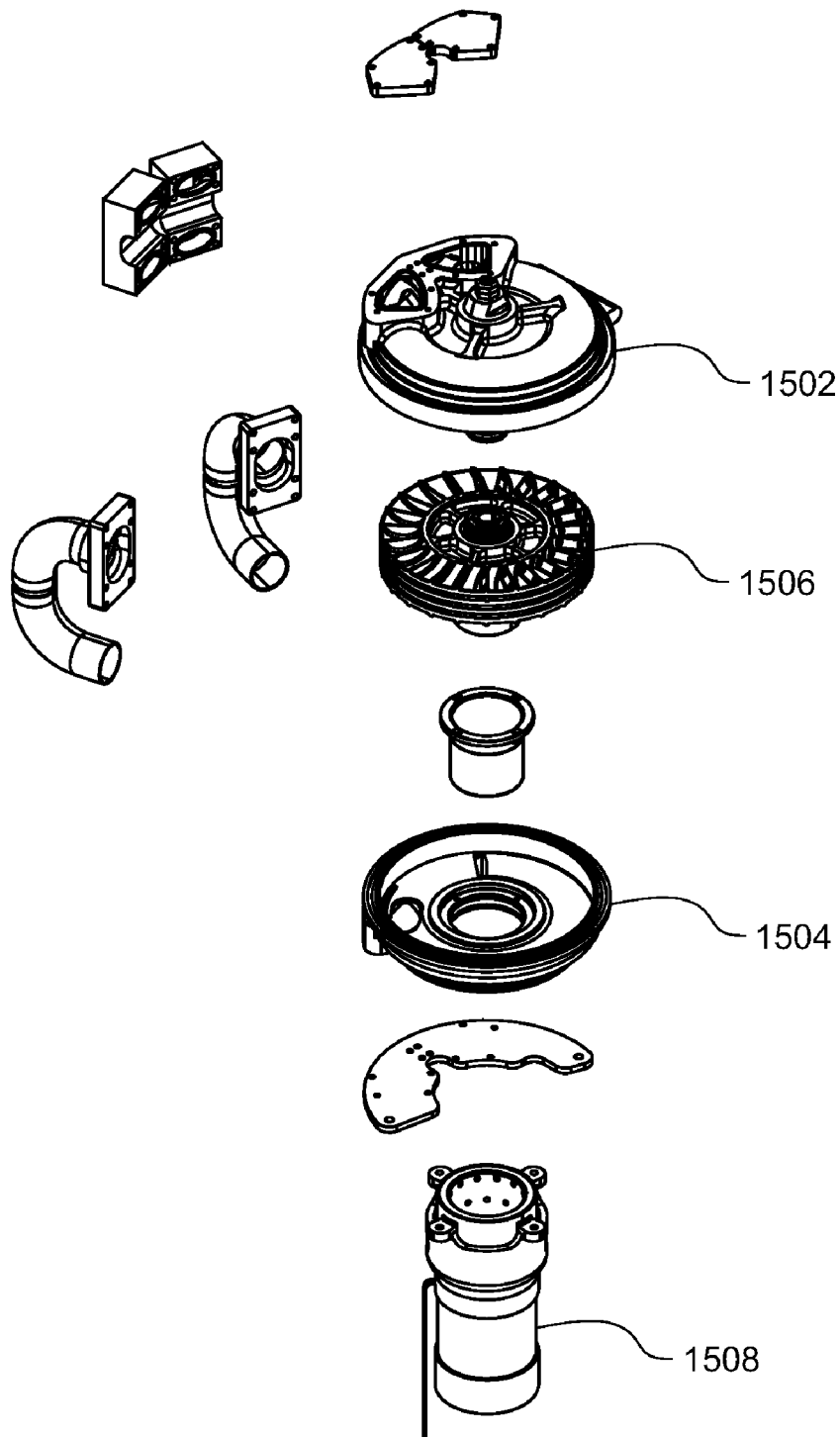


FIG.15C

1502

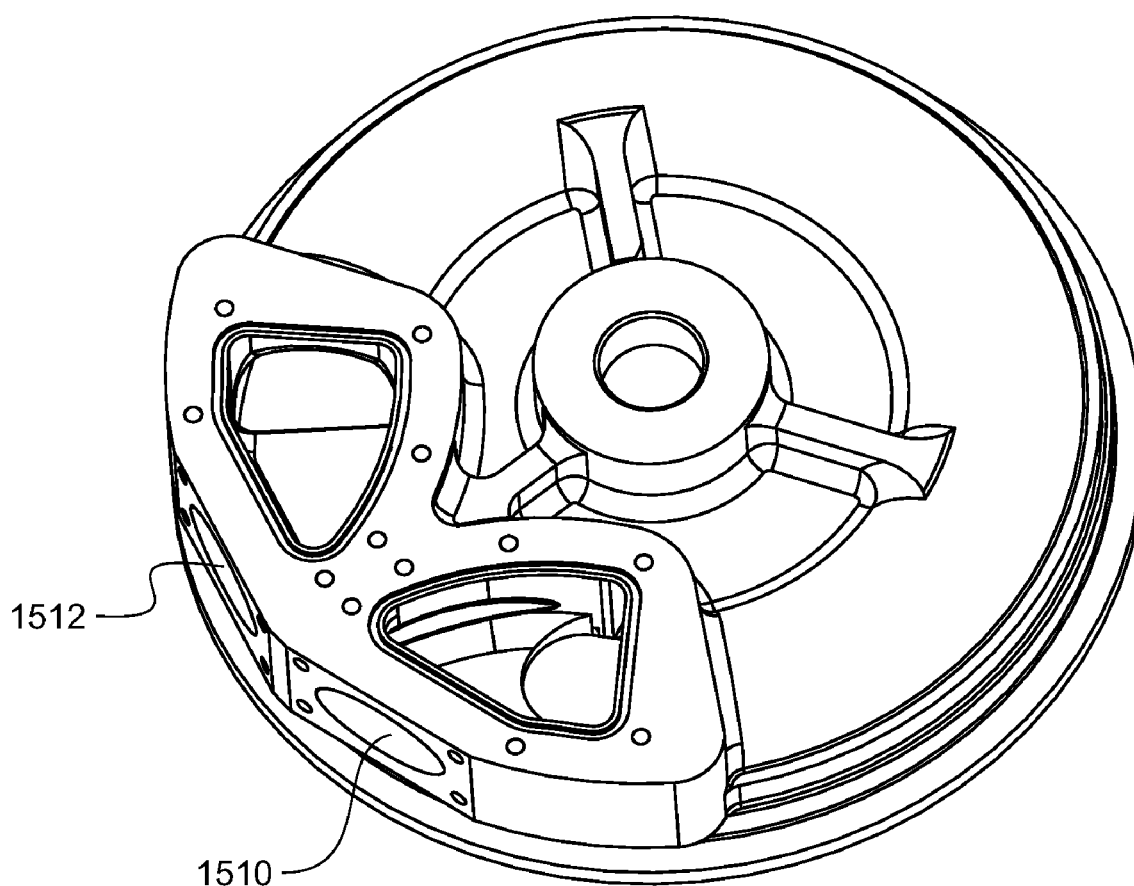


FIG.15D

1502

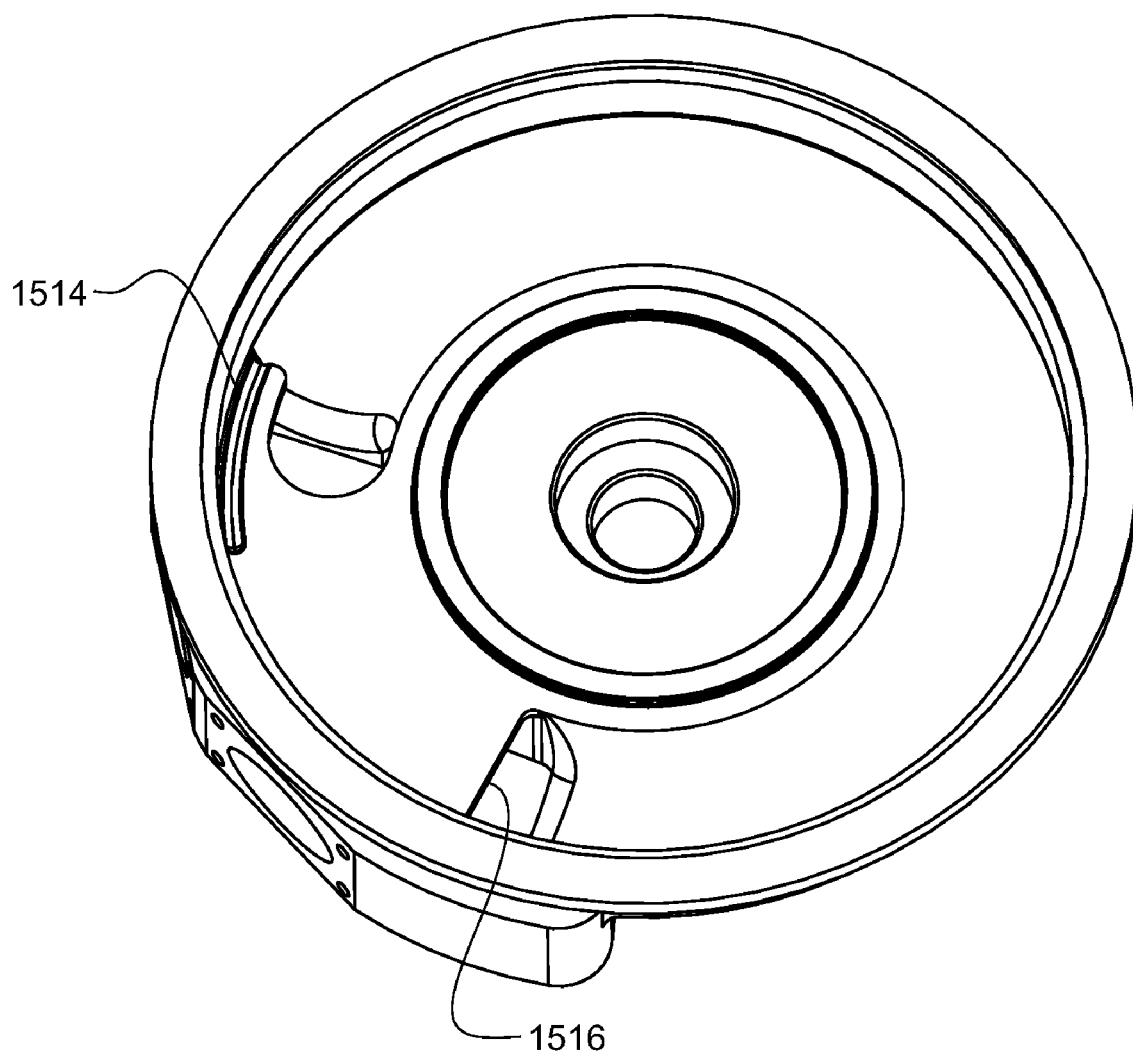


FIG.15E

1504

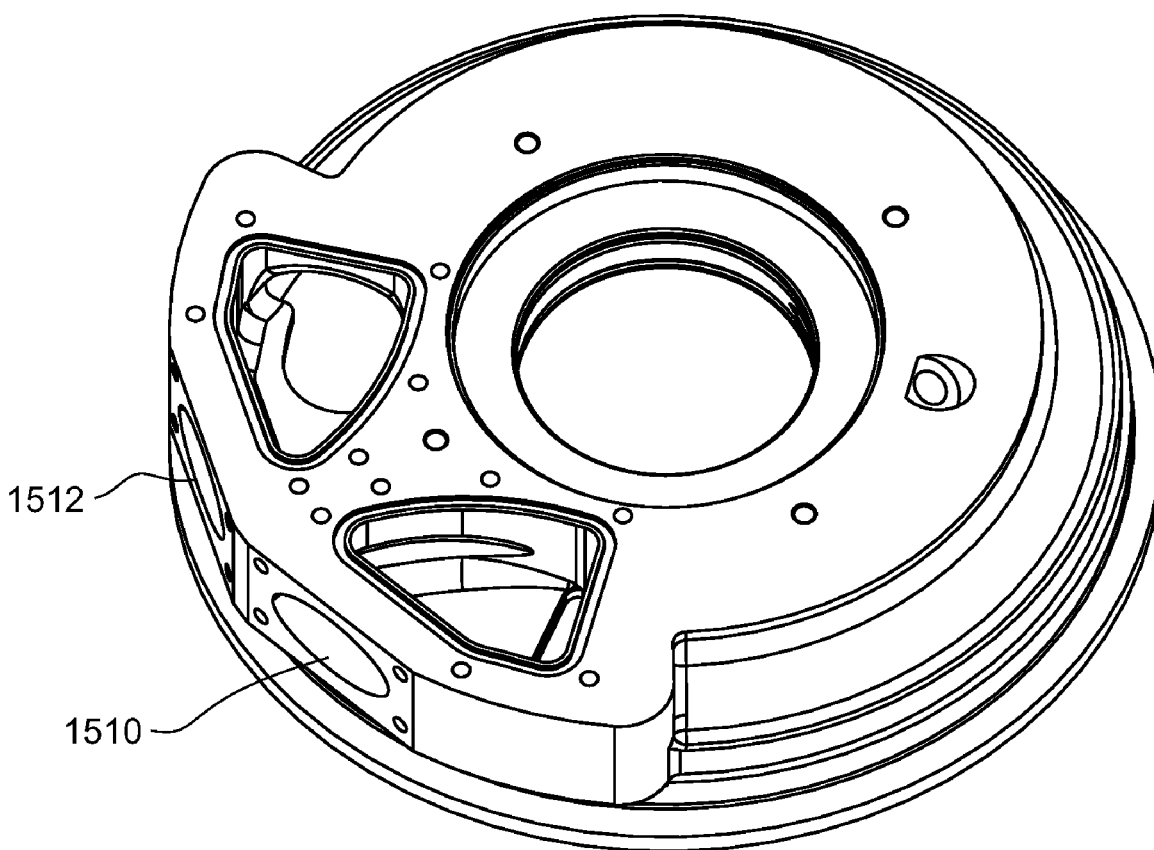


FIG.15F

1504

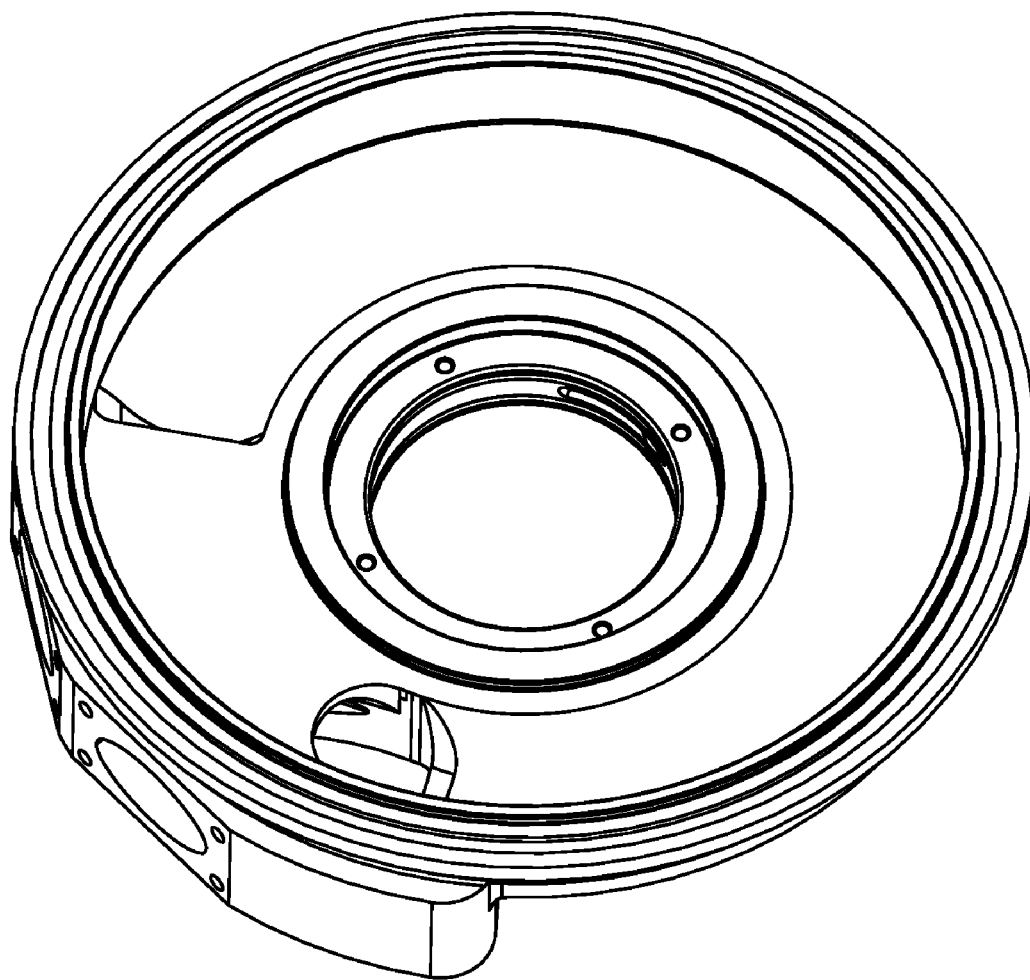


FIG.15G

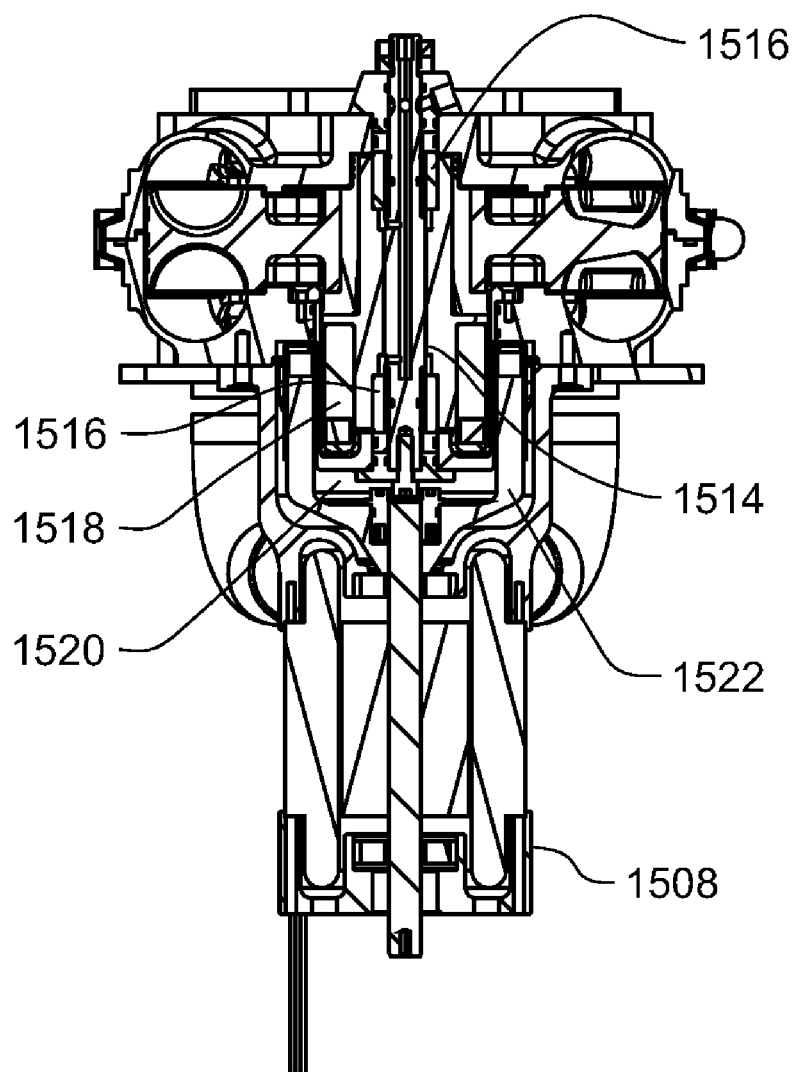


FIG.15H

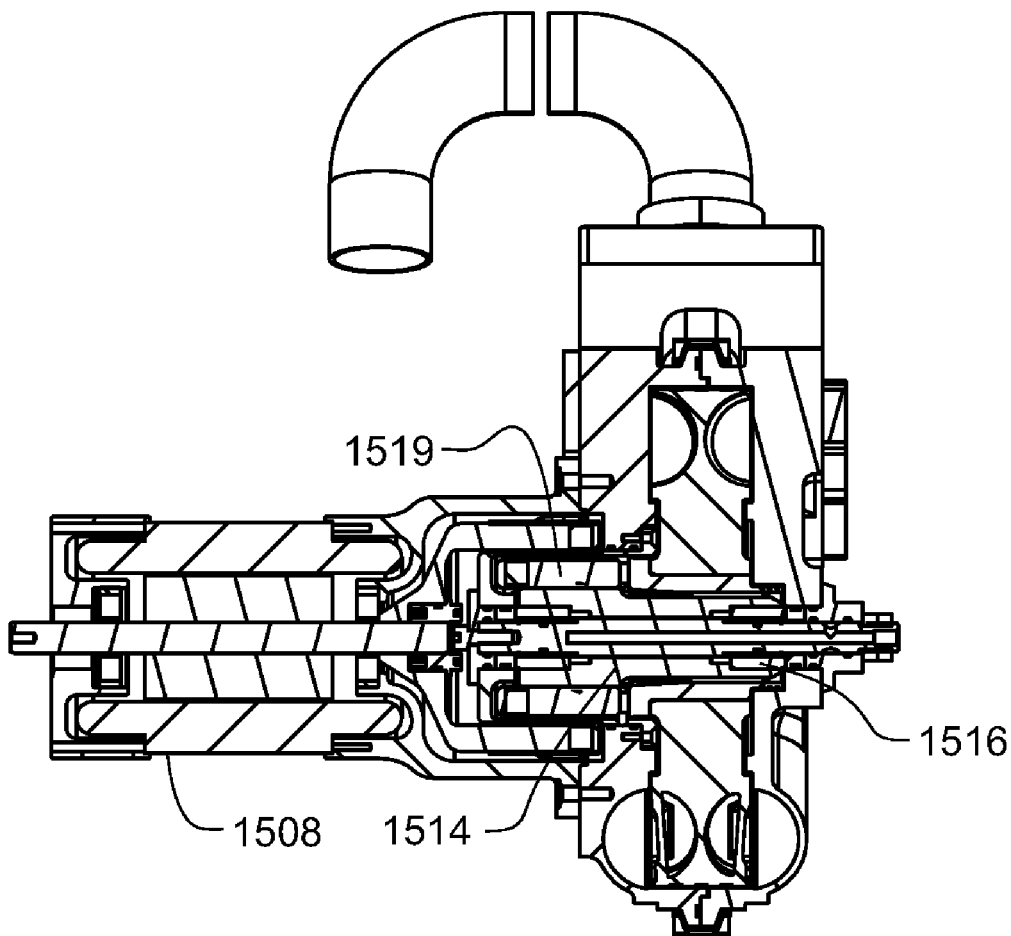


FIG.15I

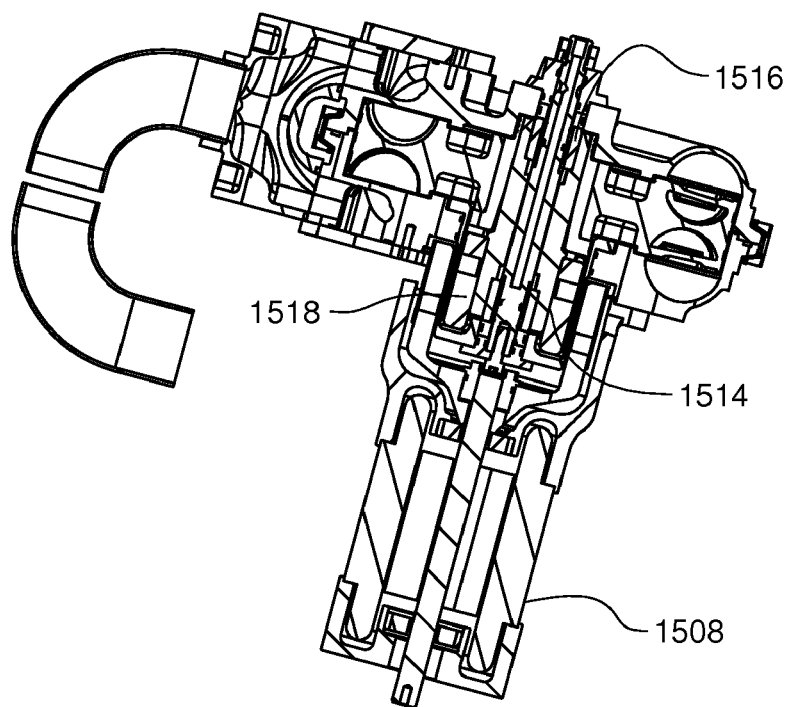
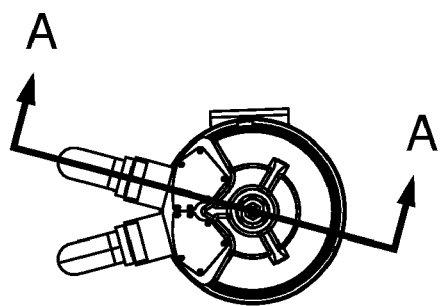


FIG.15J

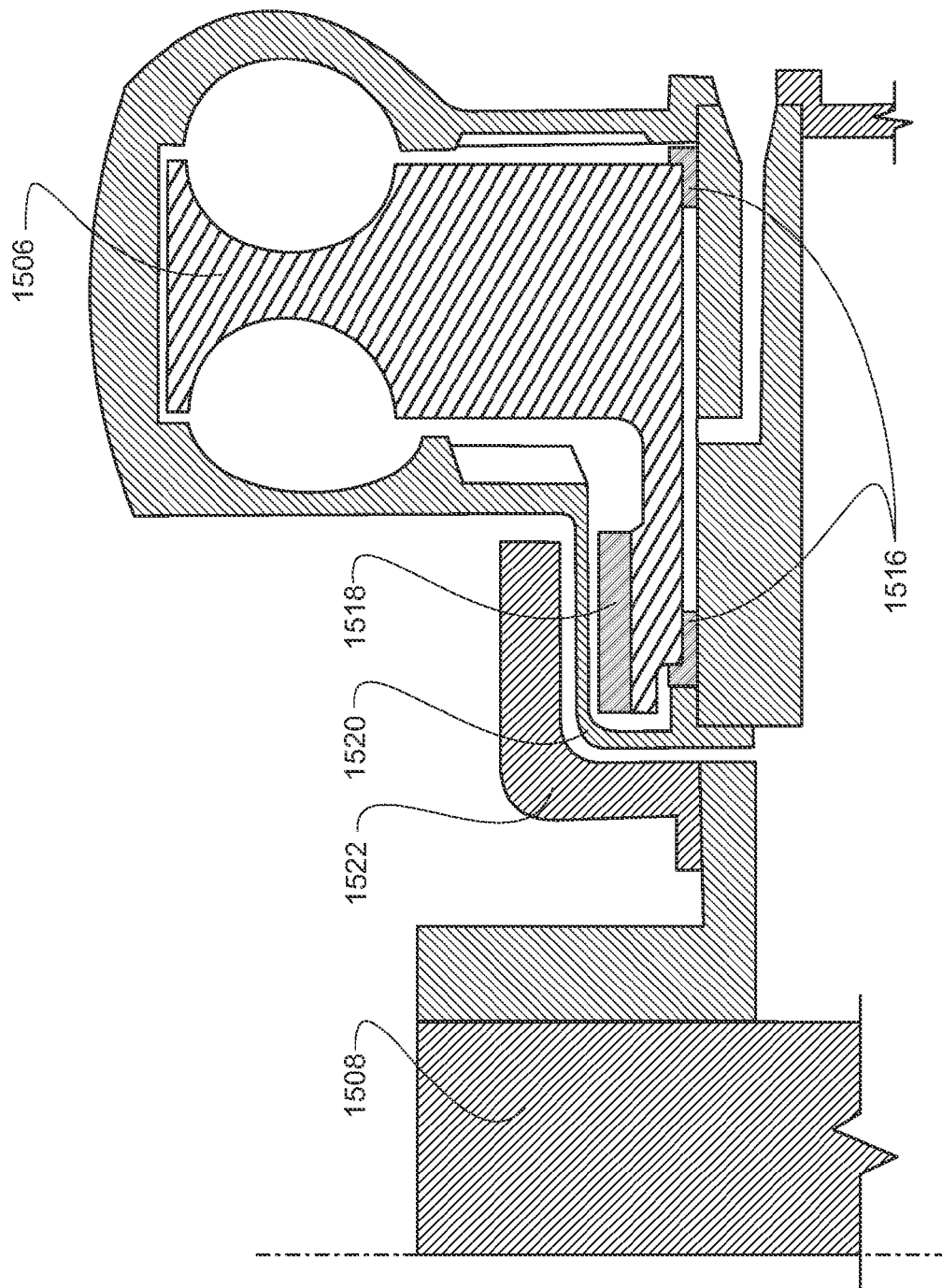


FIG. 15K

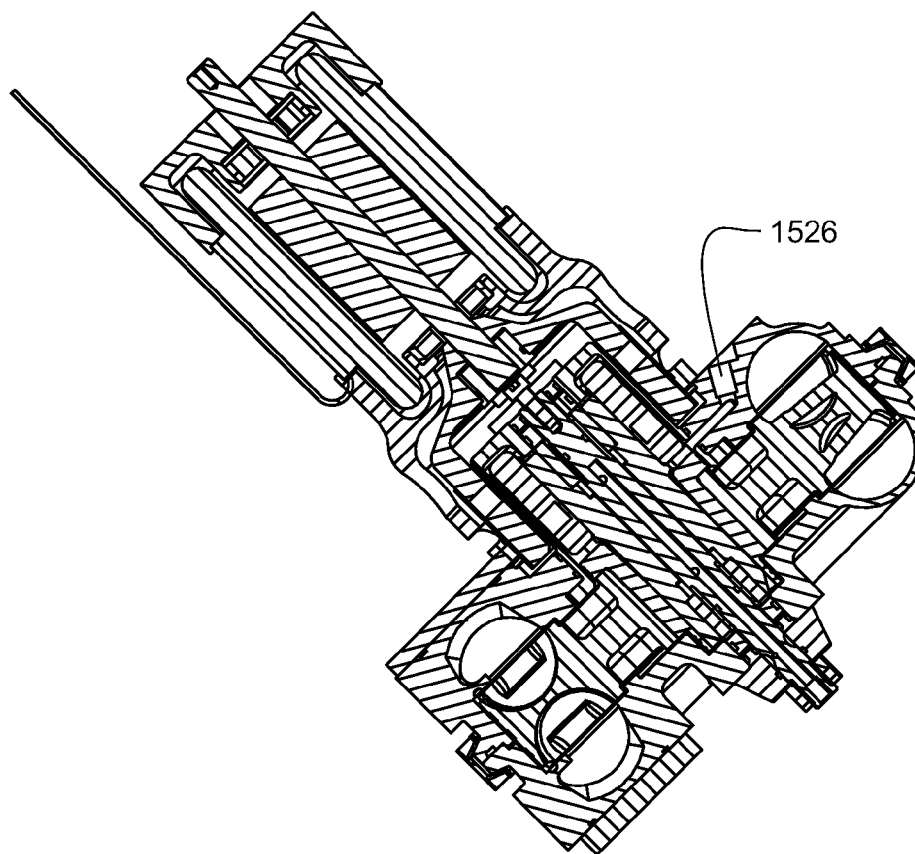
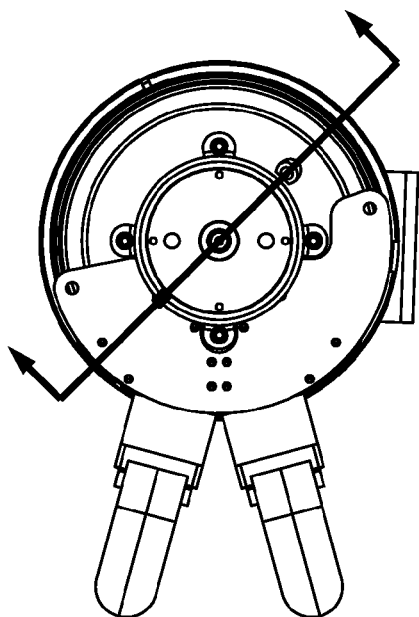


FIG.15L

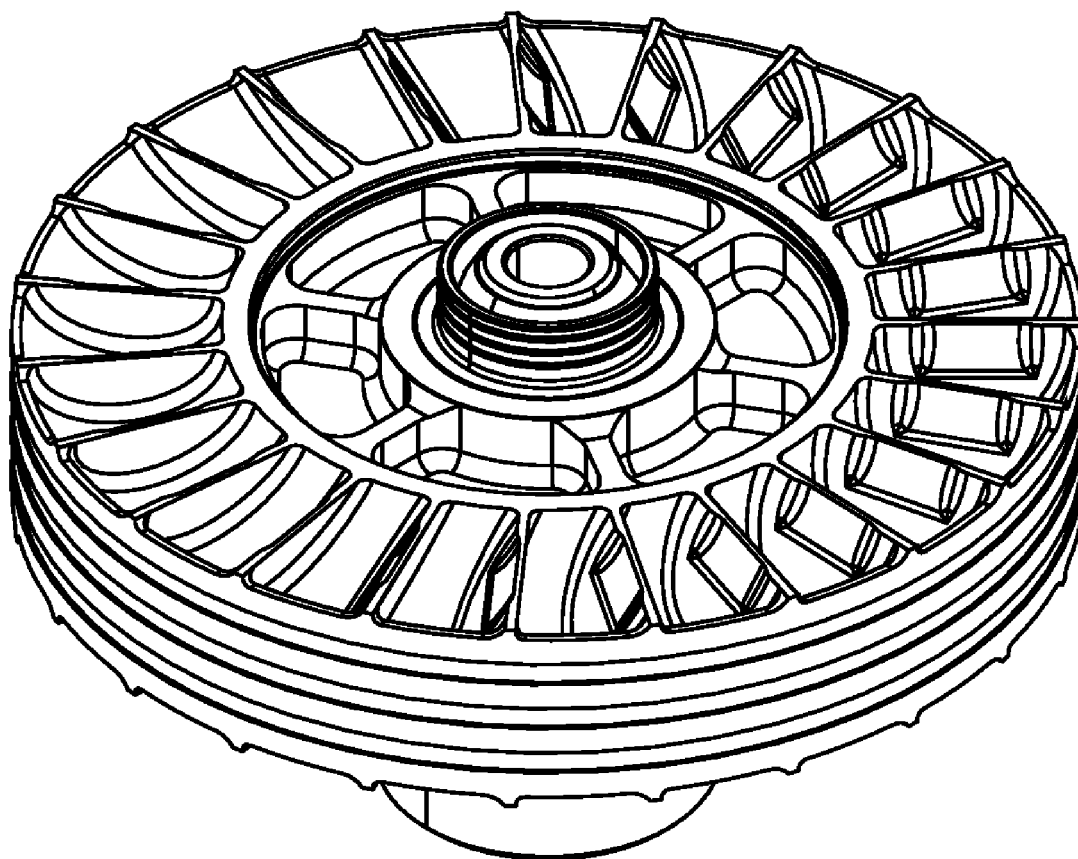


FIG.16

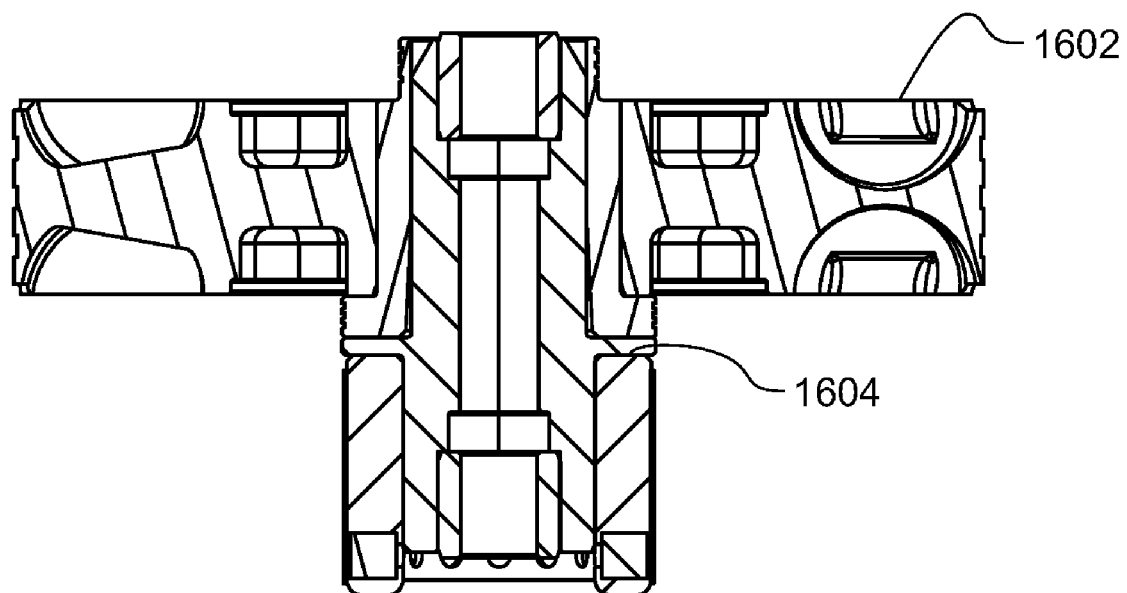


FIG.16A

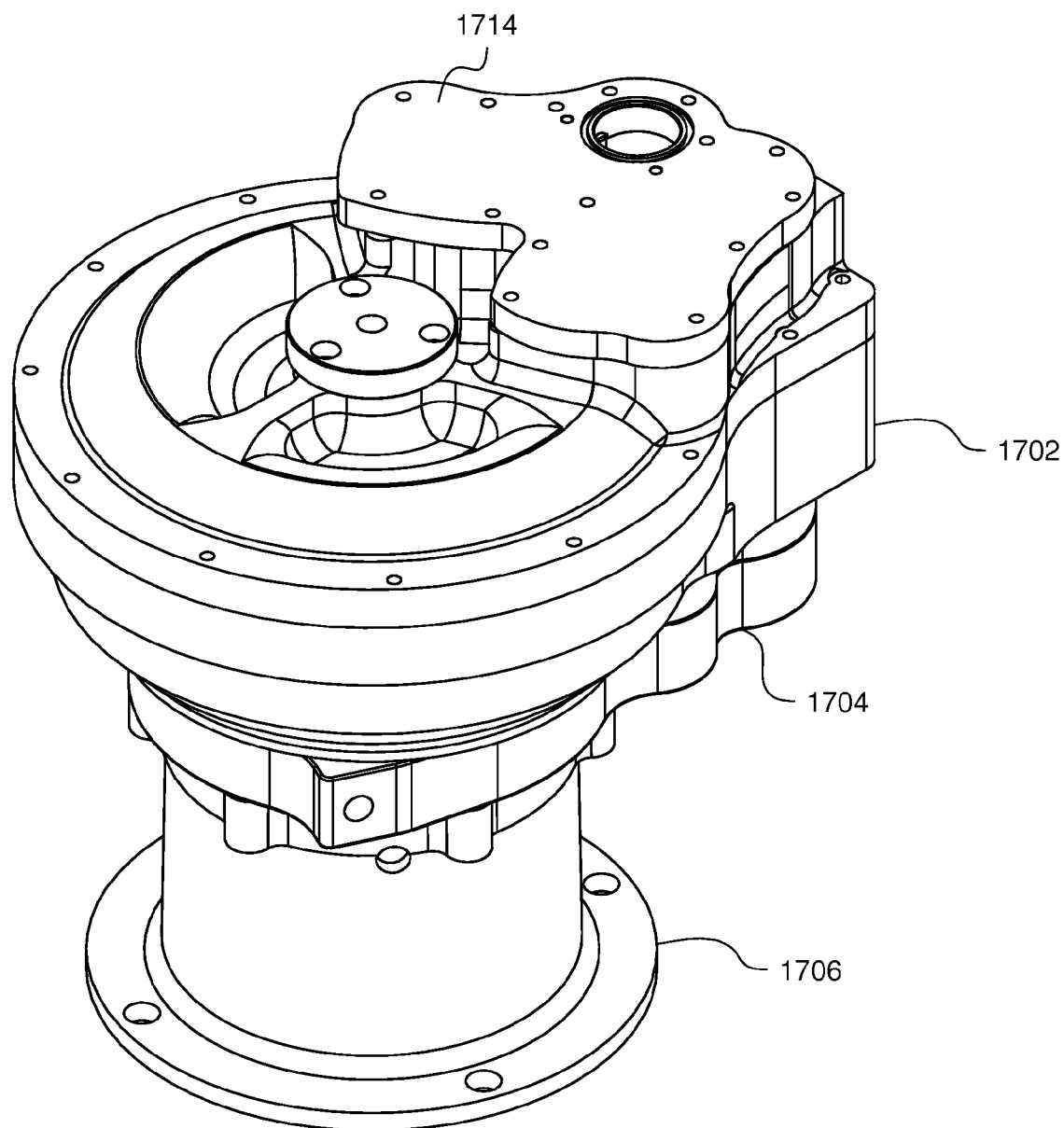


FIG.17

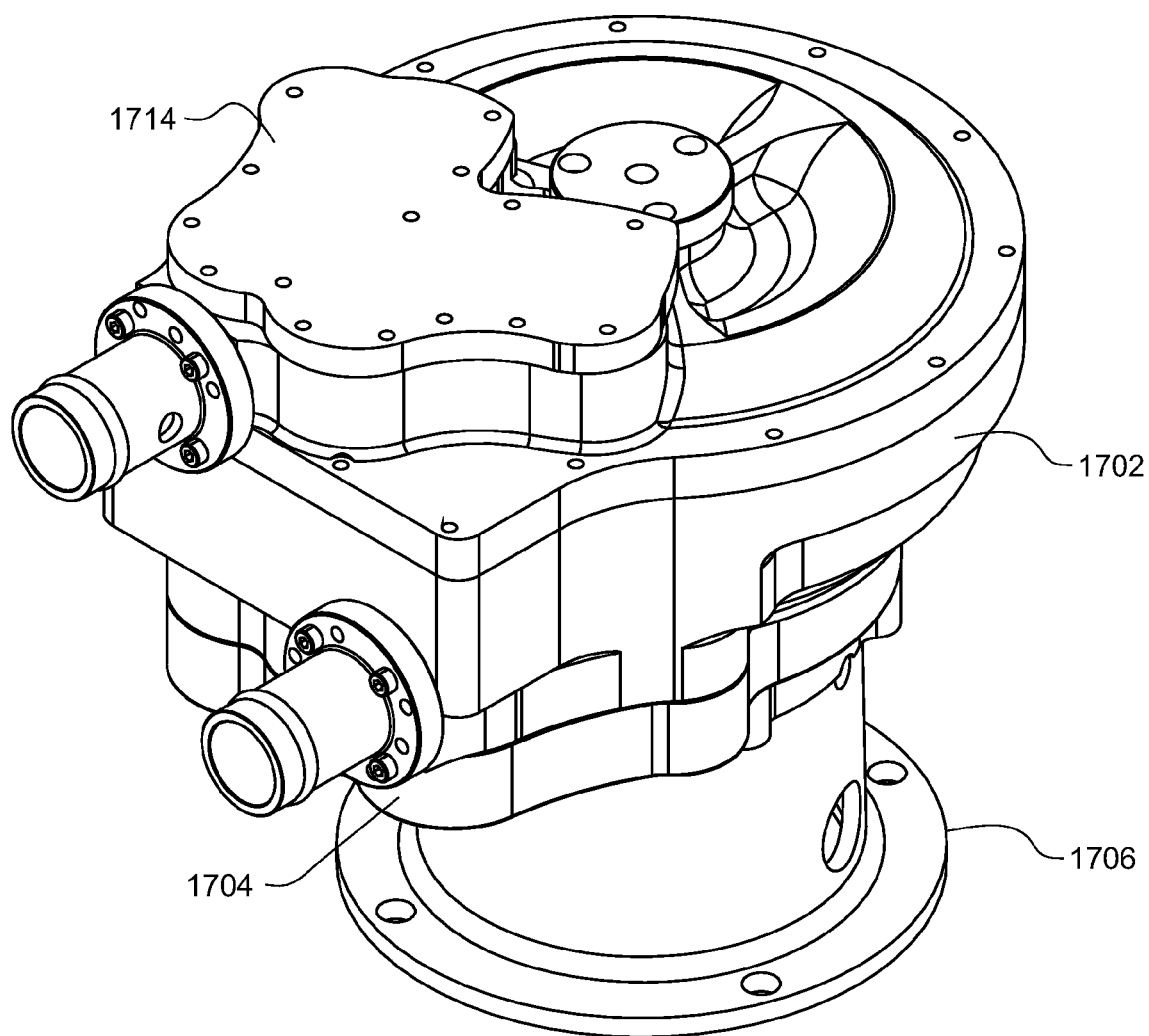


FIG.17A

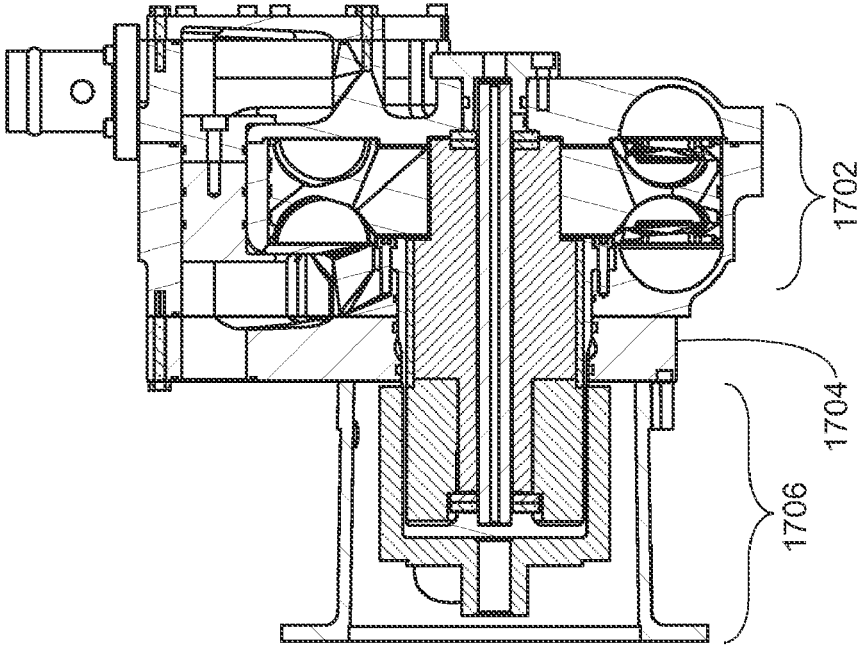
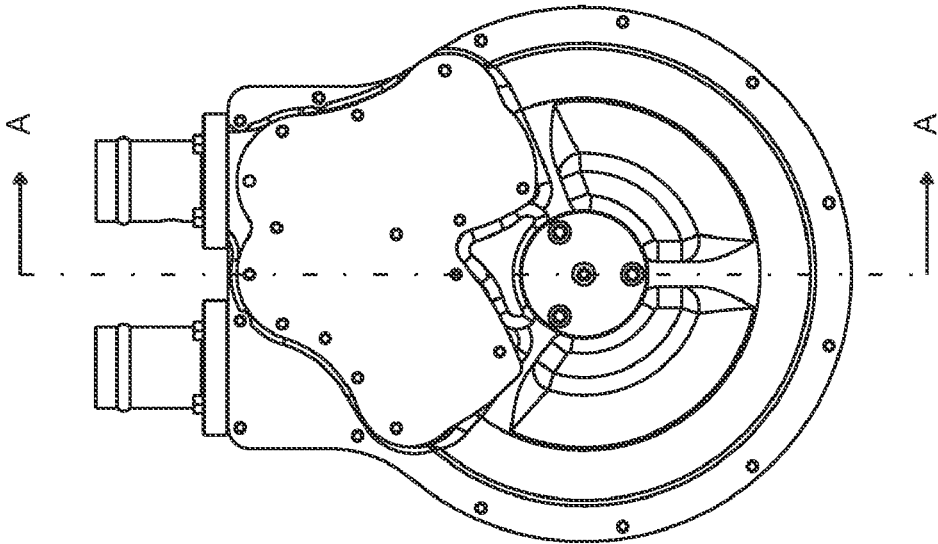


FIG. 17B

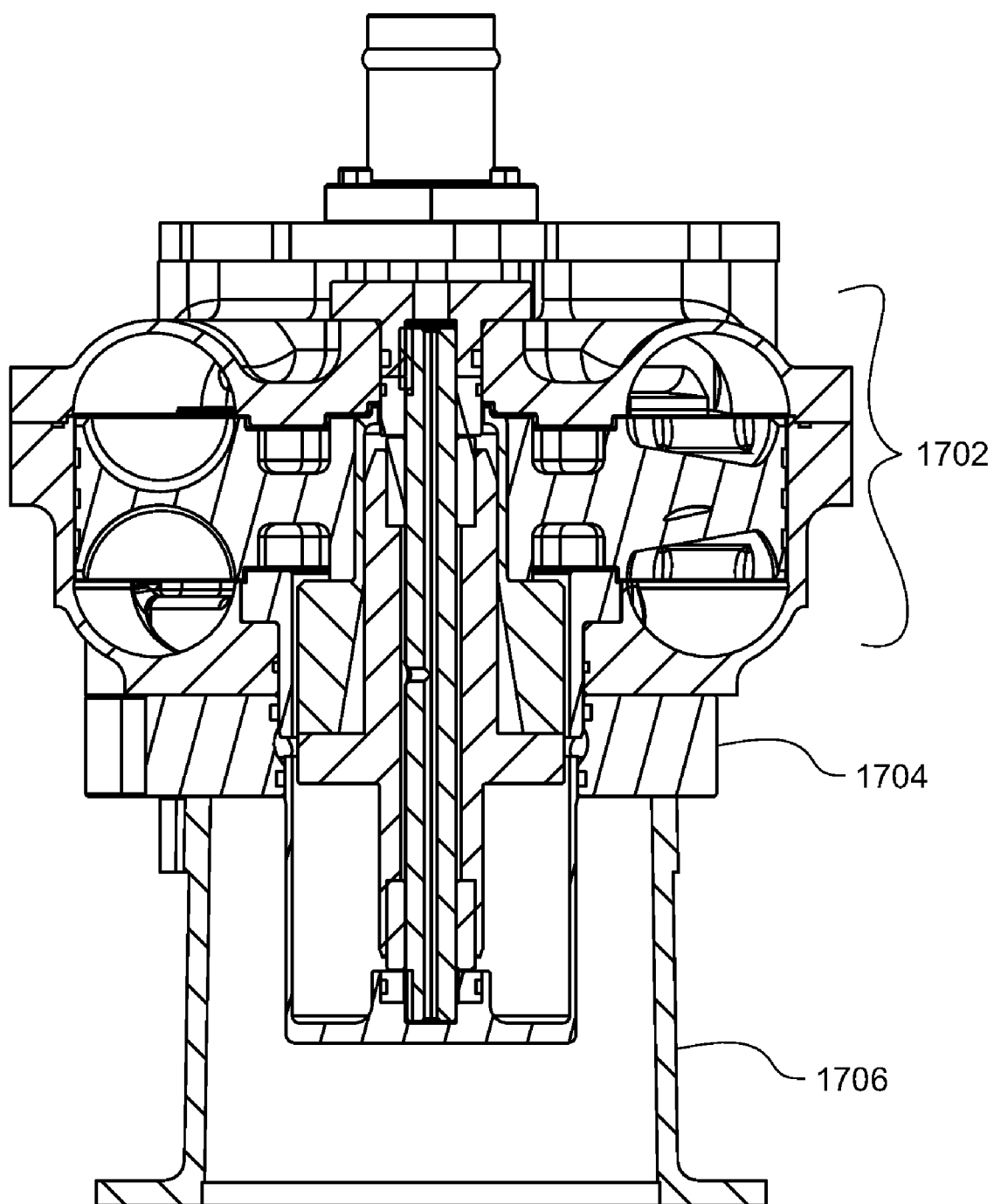


FIG.17C

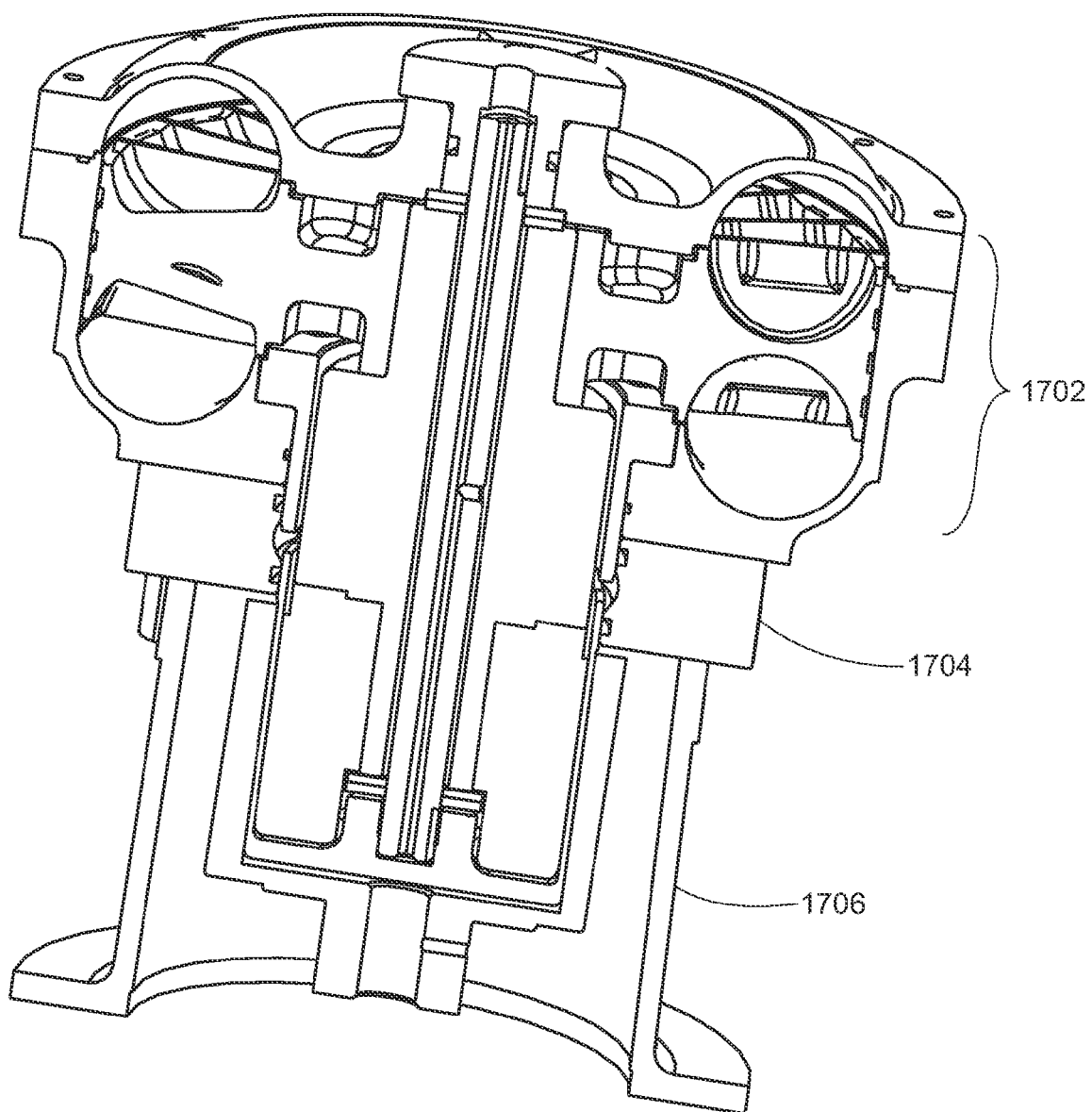


FIG. 17D

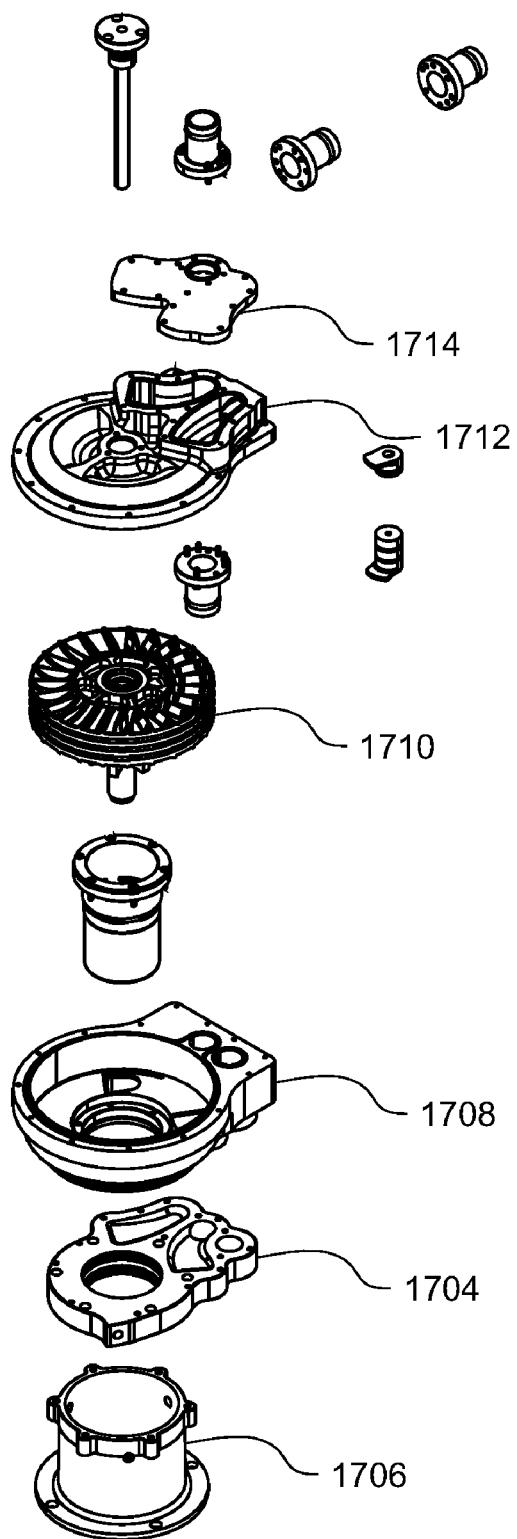


FIG.17E

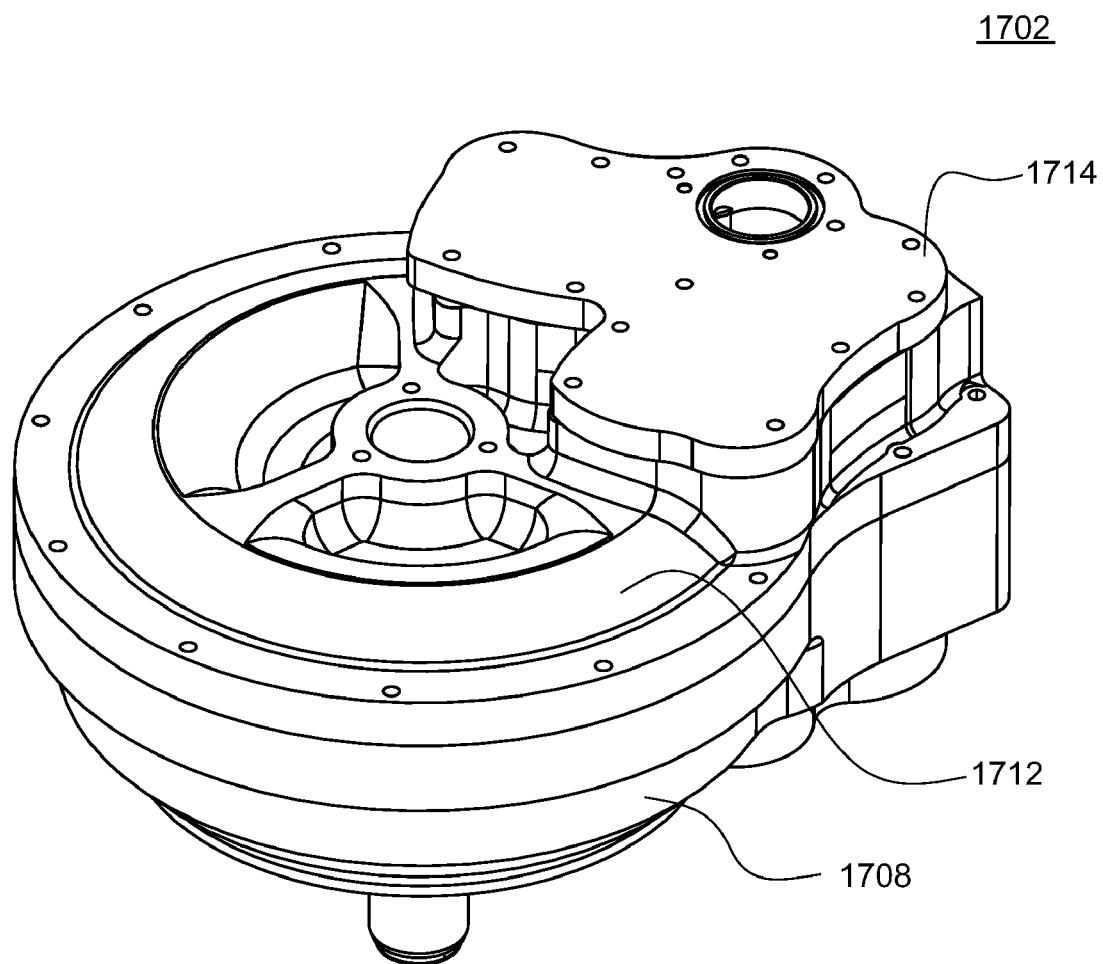


FIG. 17F

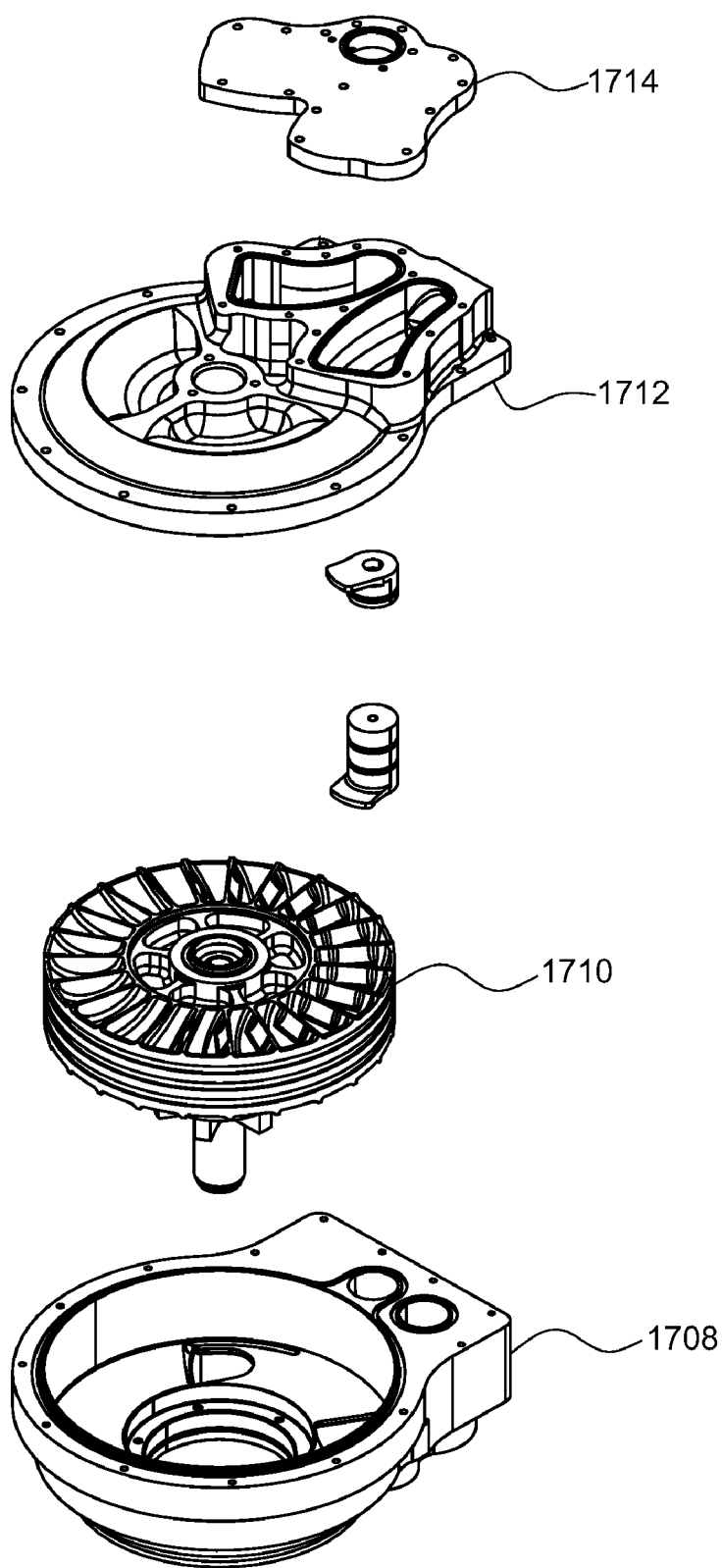


FIG. 17G

1702

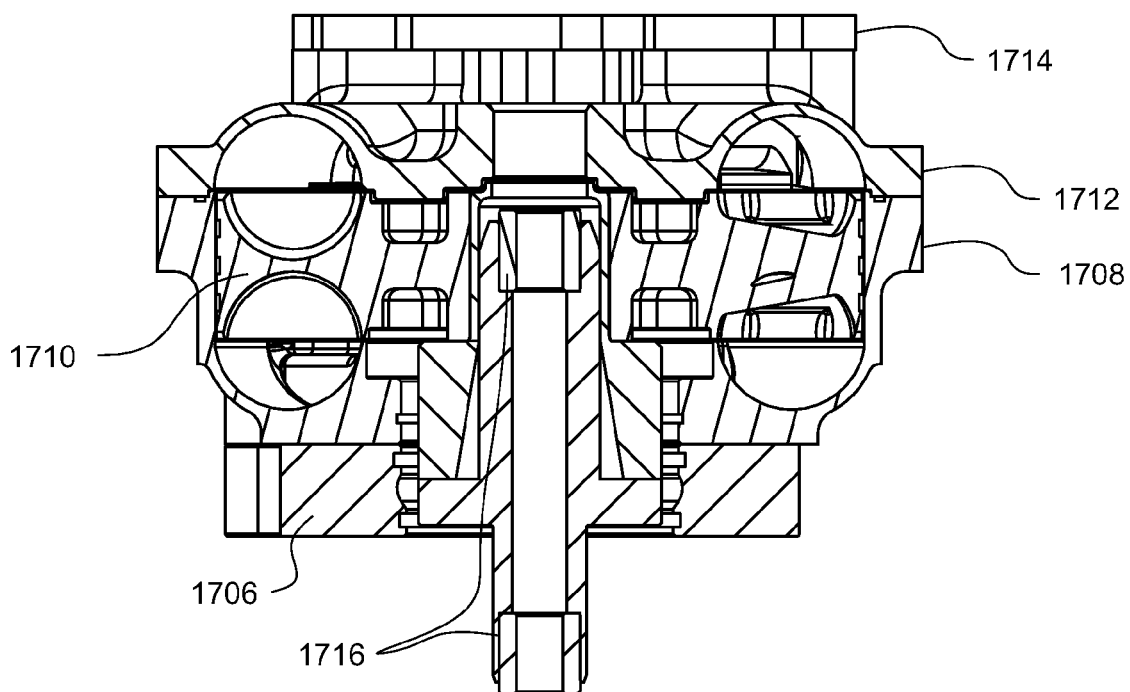


FIG.17H

1702

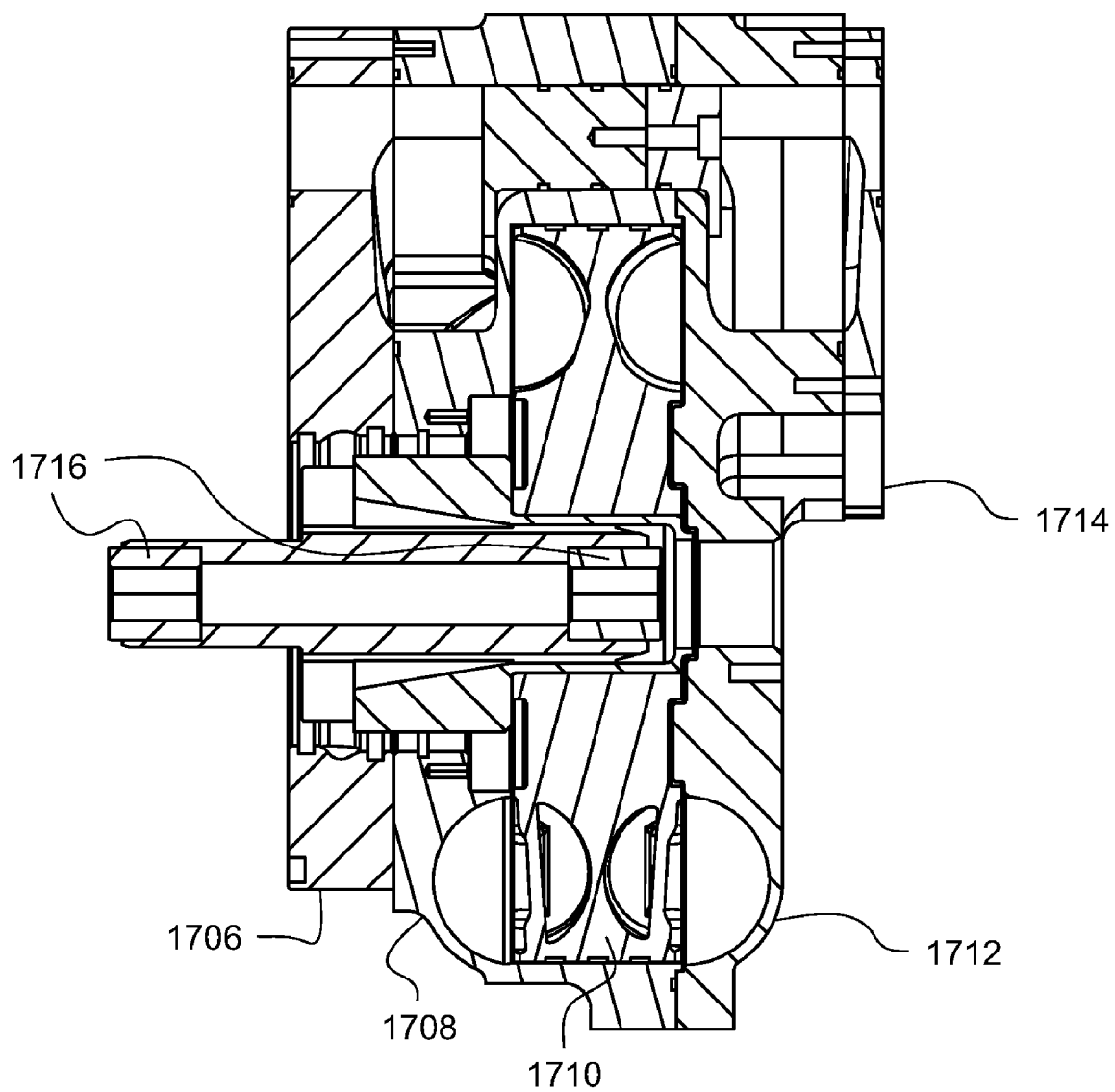


FIG.17I

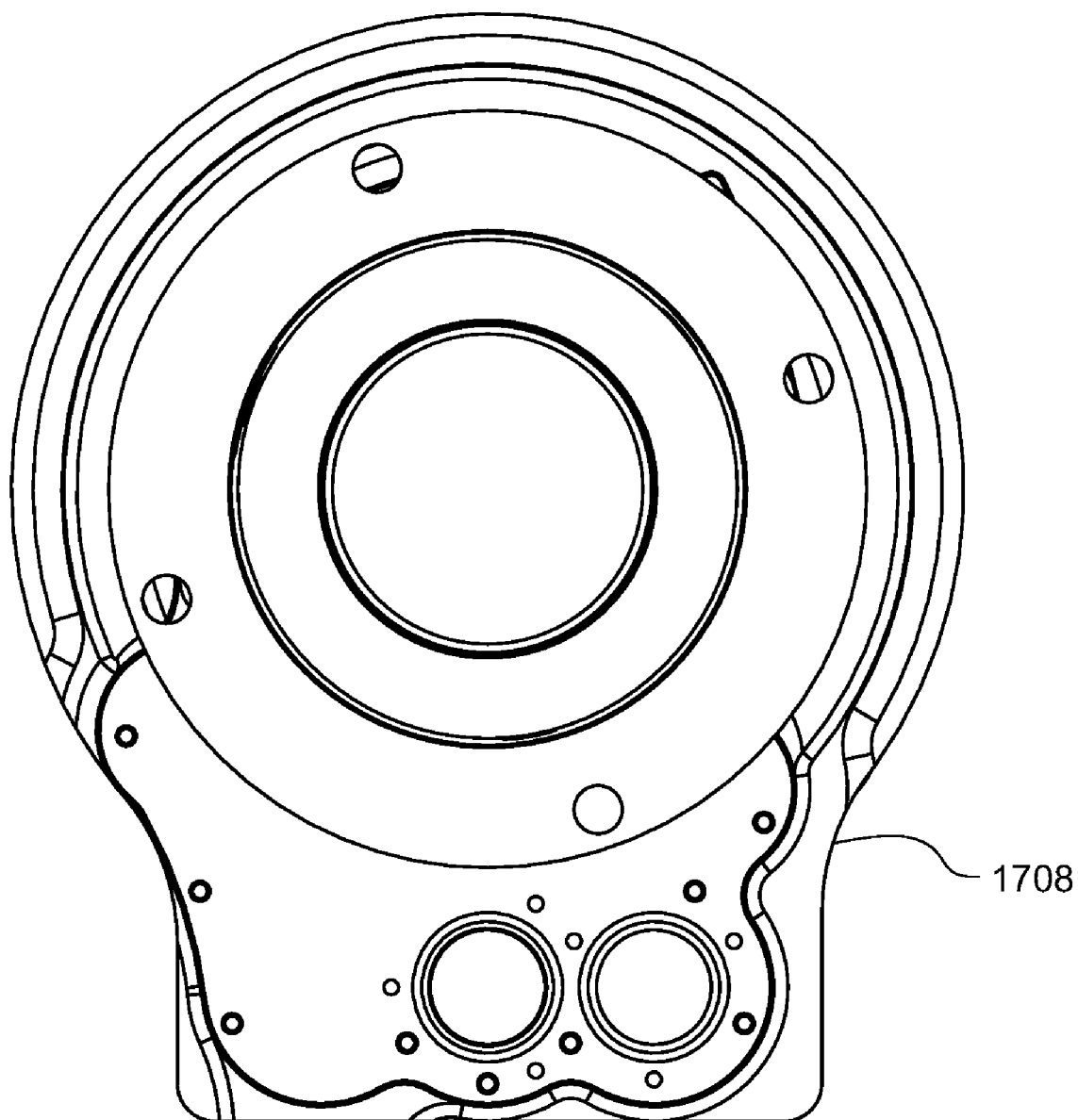


FIG.17J

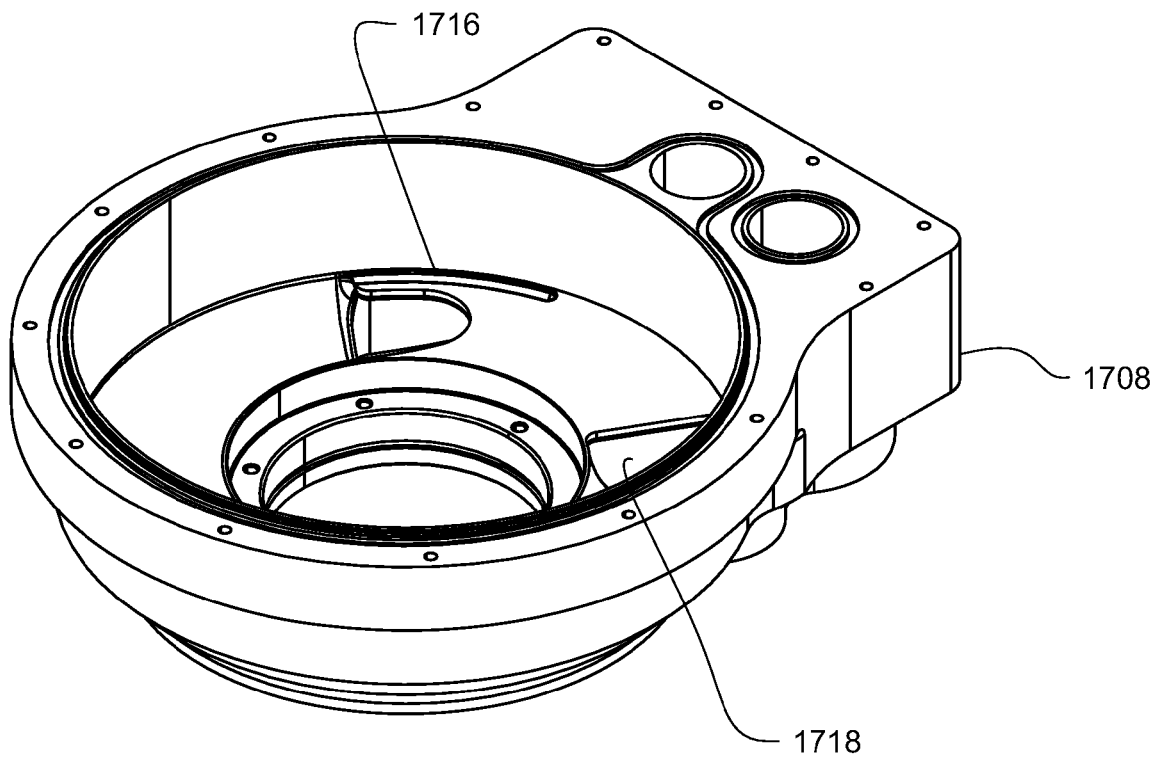


FIG.17K

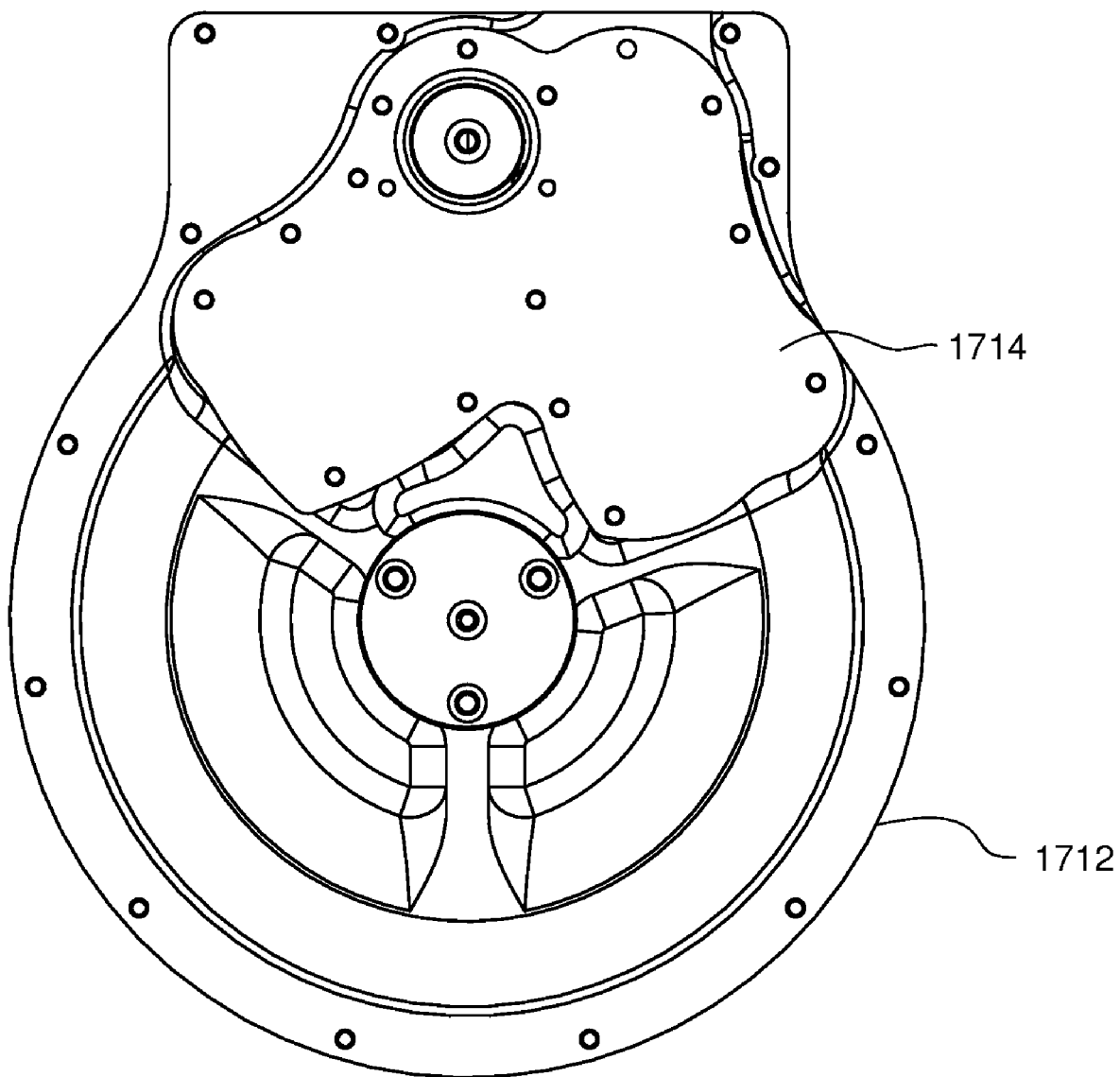


FIG.17L

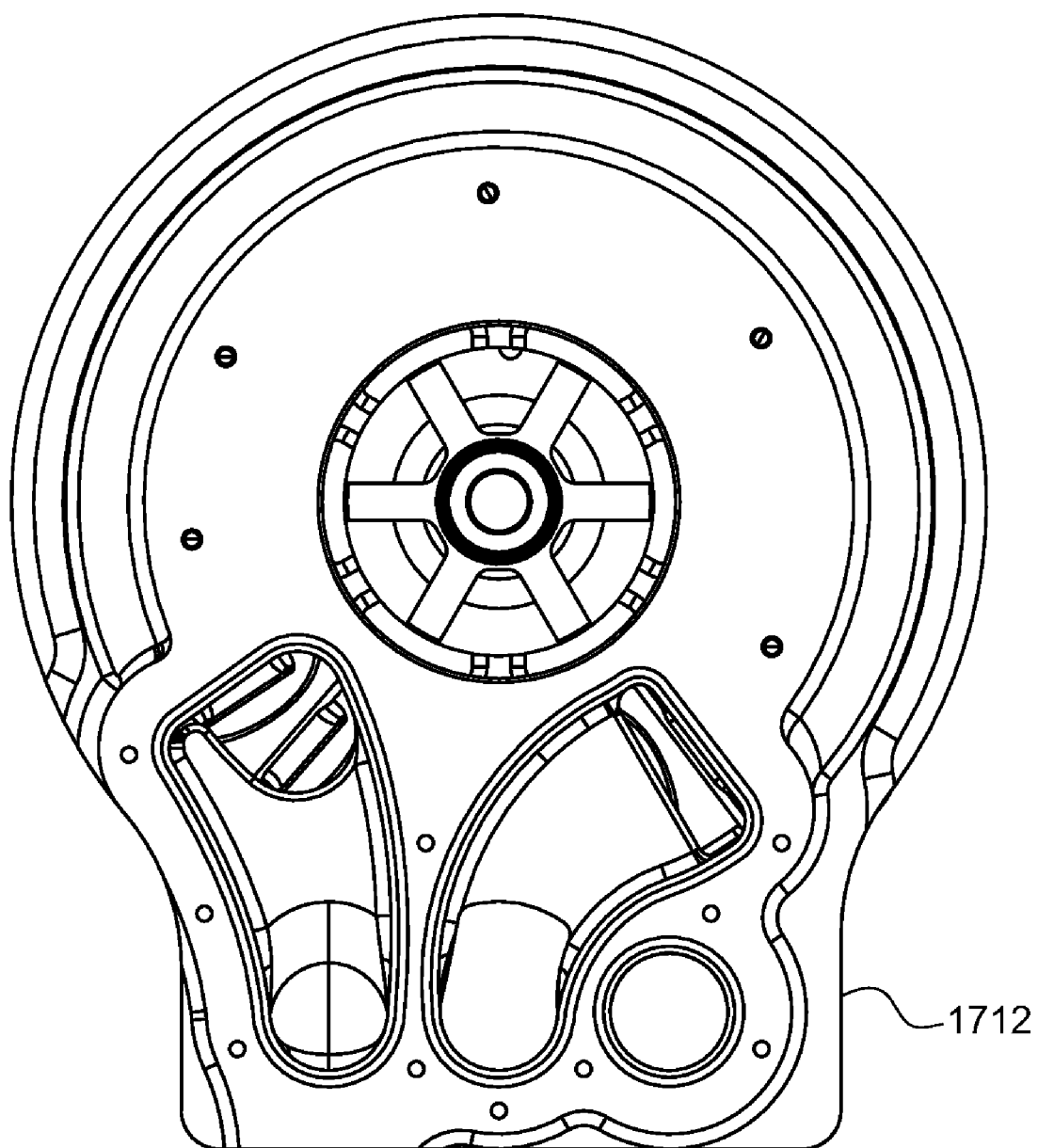


FIG. 17M

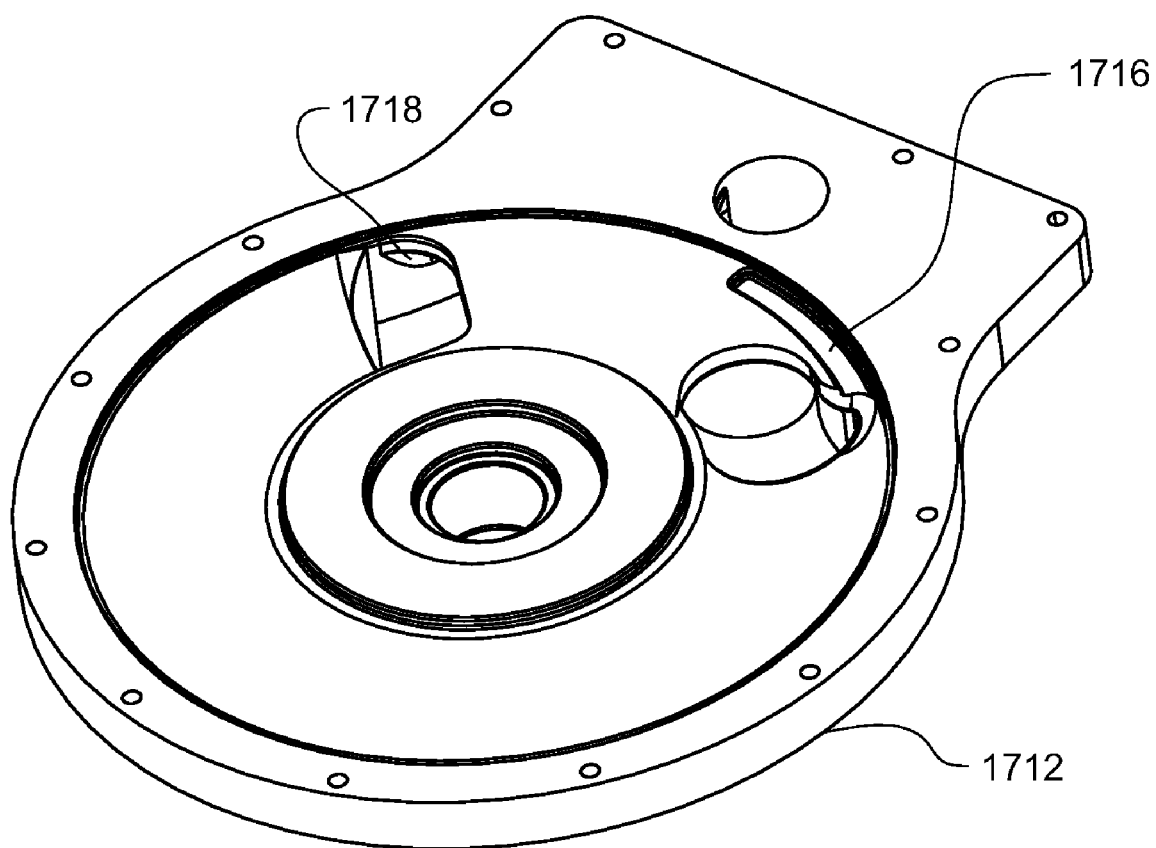


FIG.17N

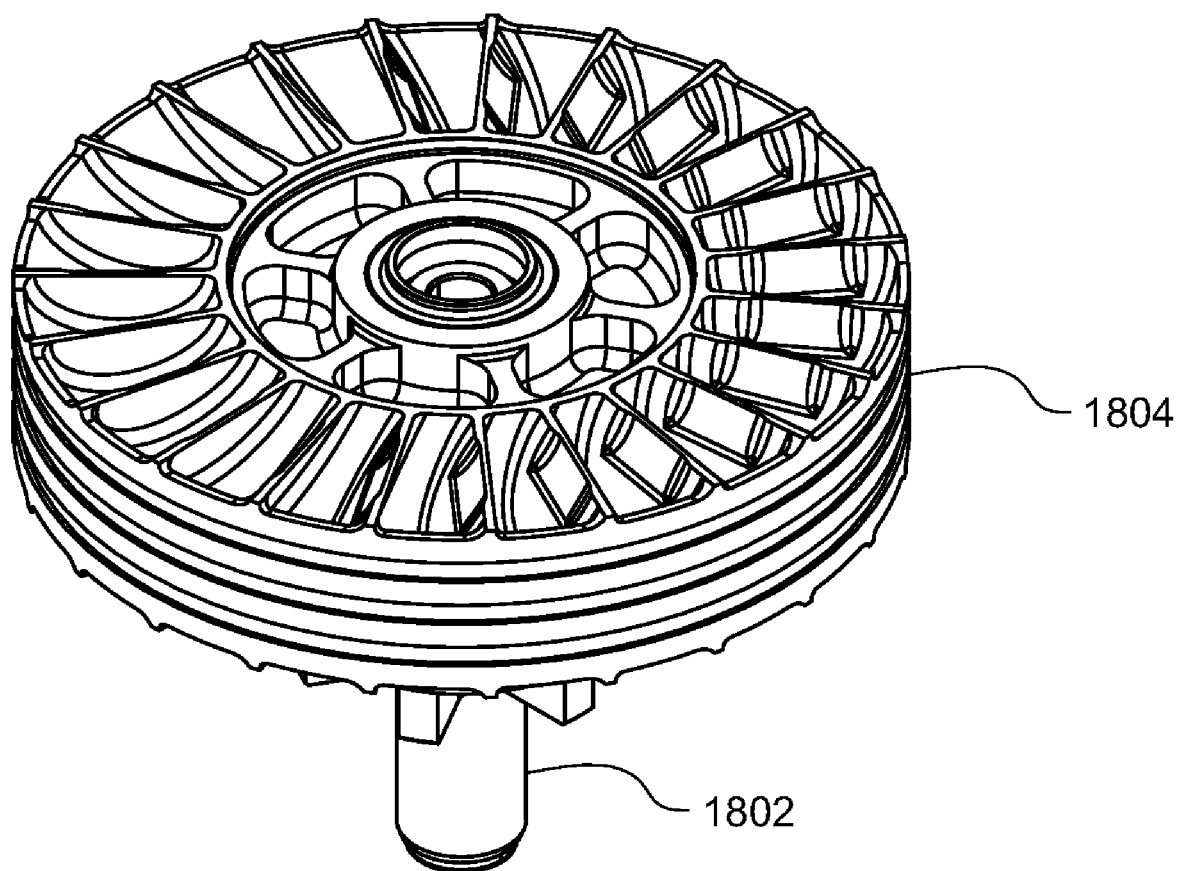


FIG.18

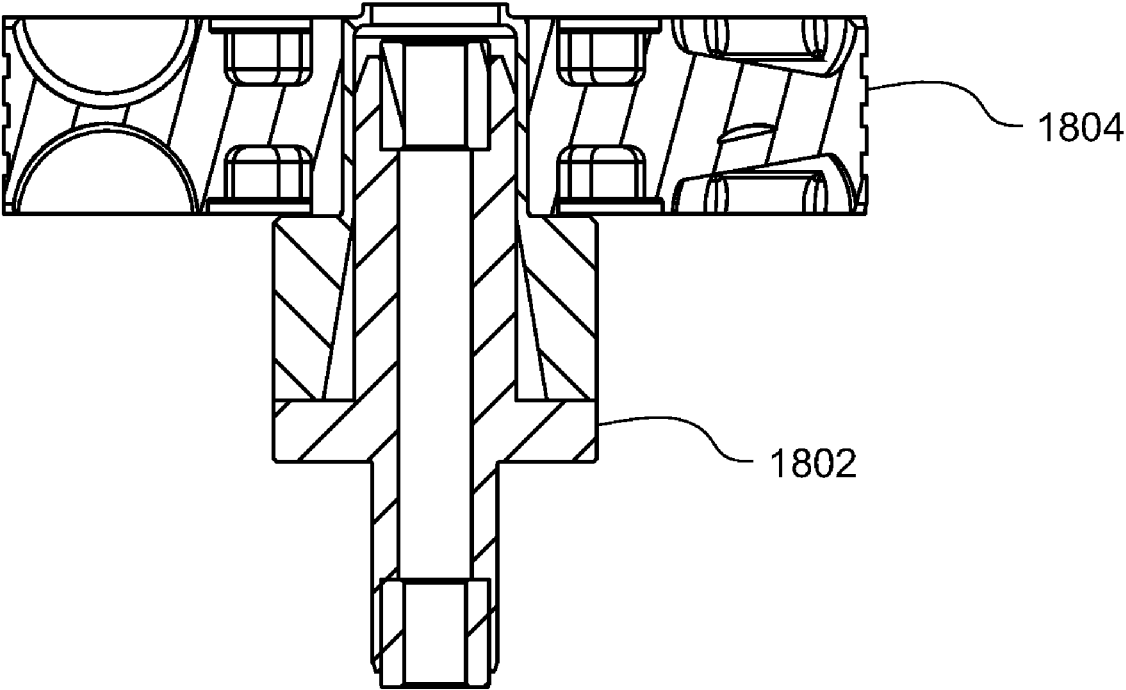


FIG.18A

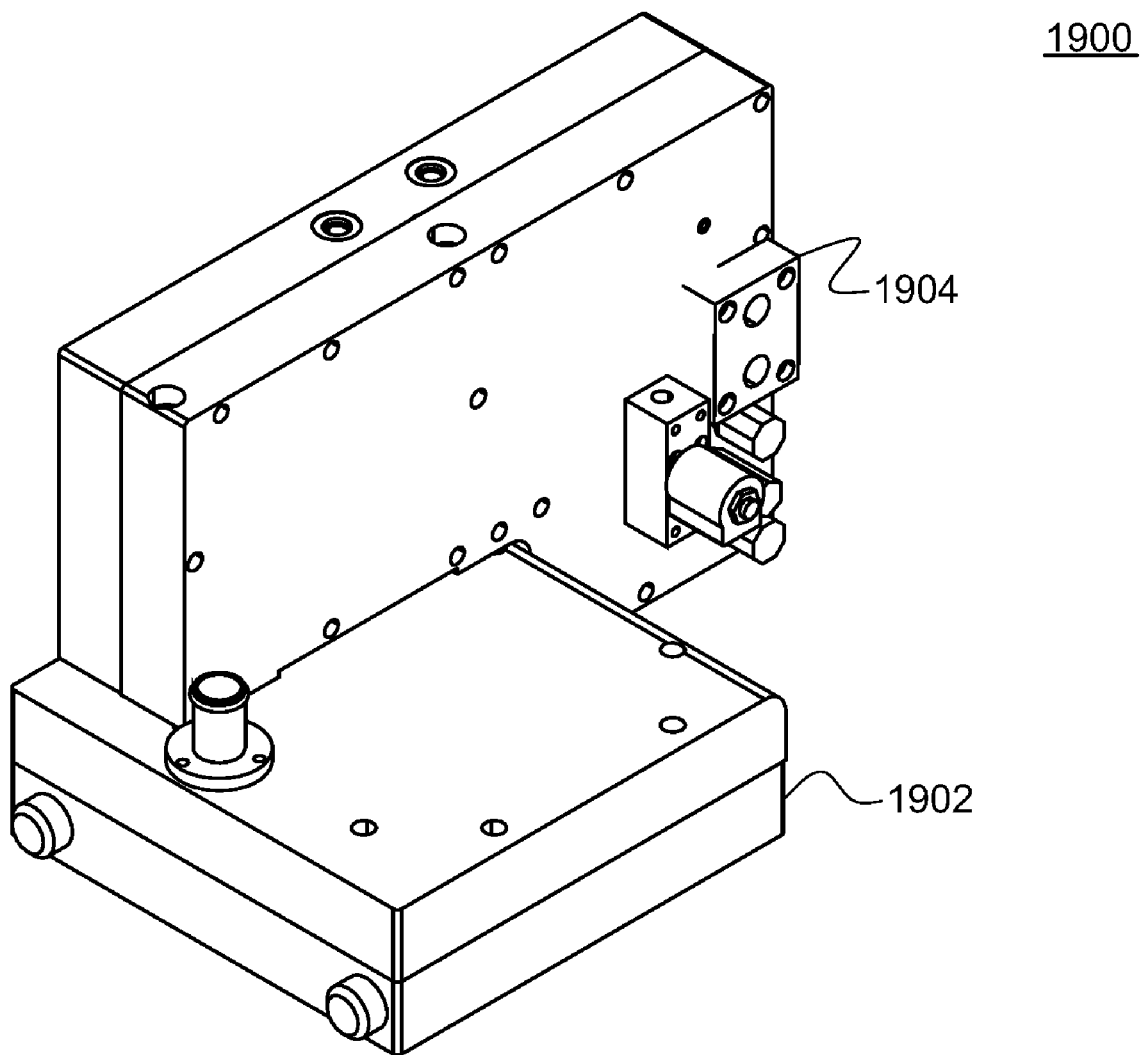


FIG. 19

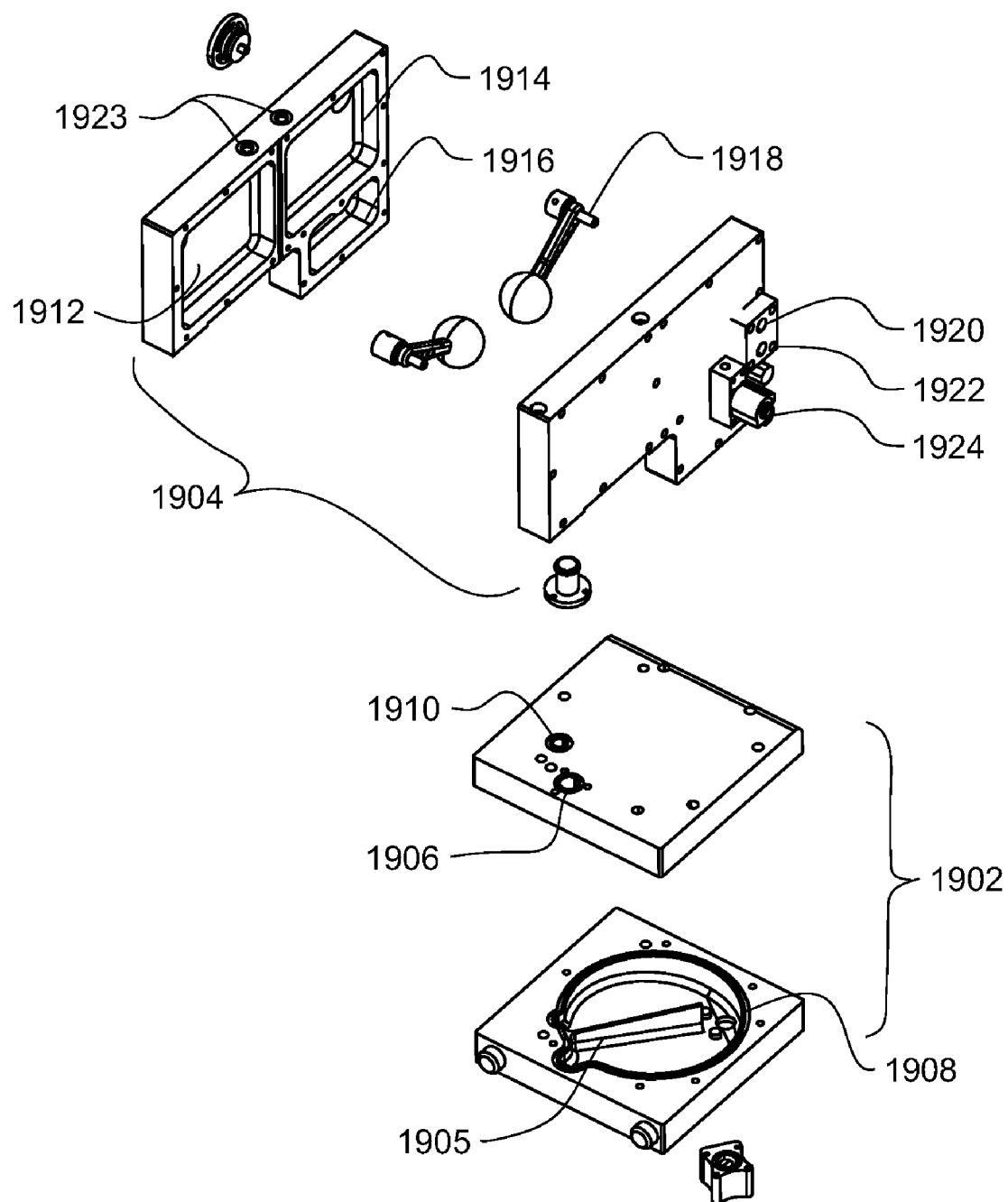


FIG.19A

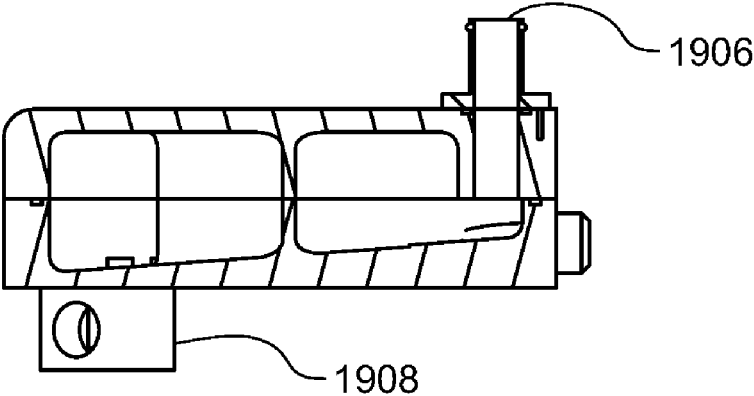
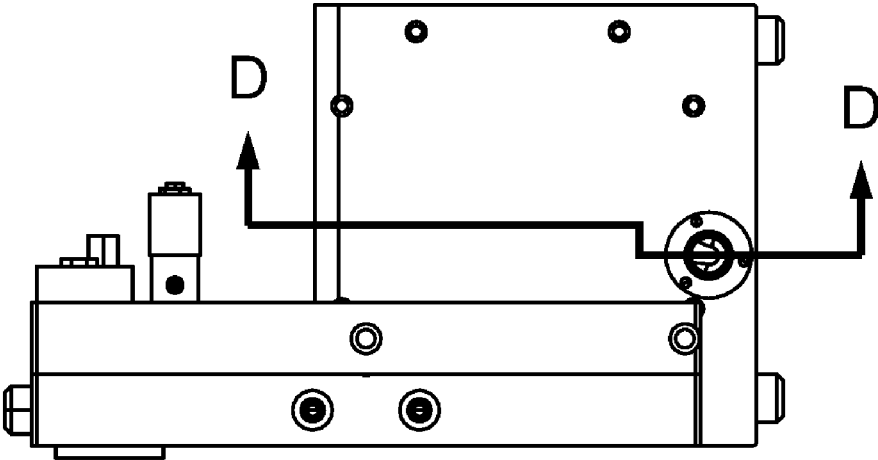


FIG.19B

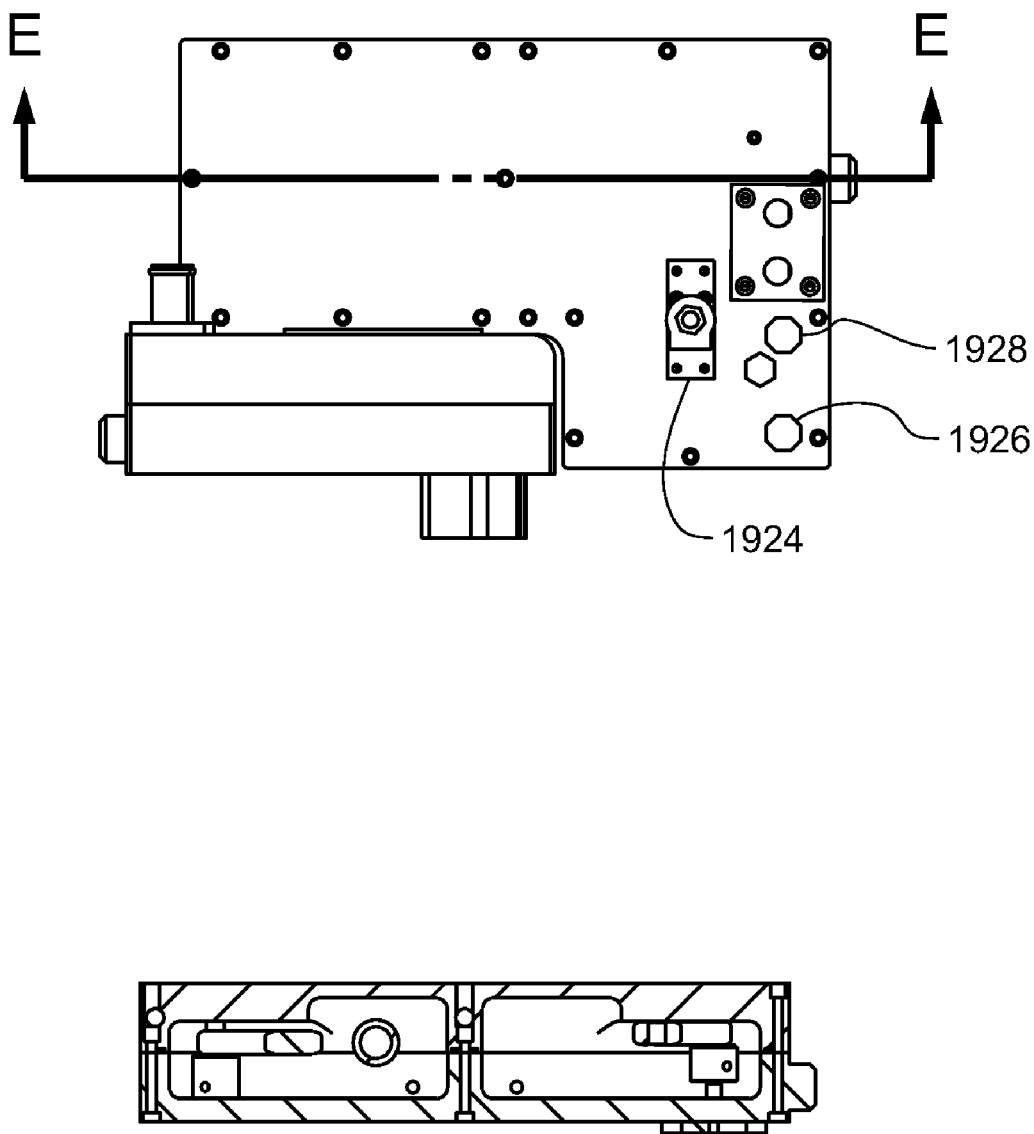


FIG.19C

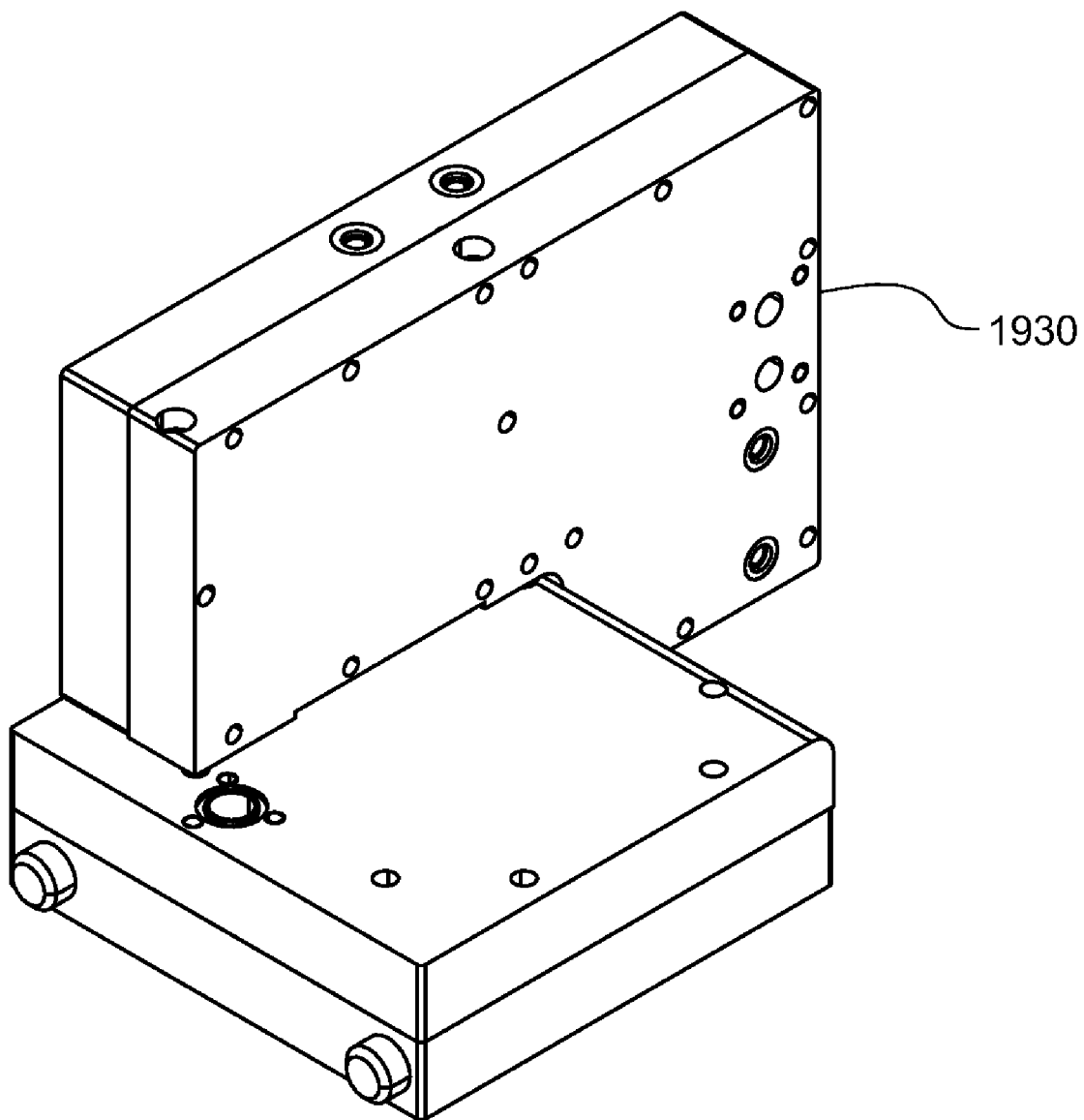


FIG. 19D

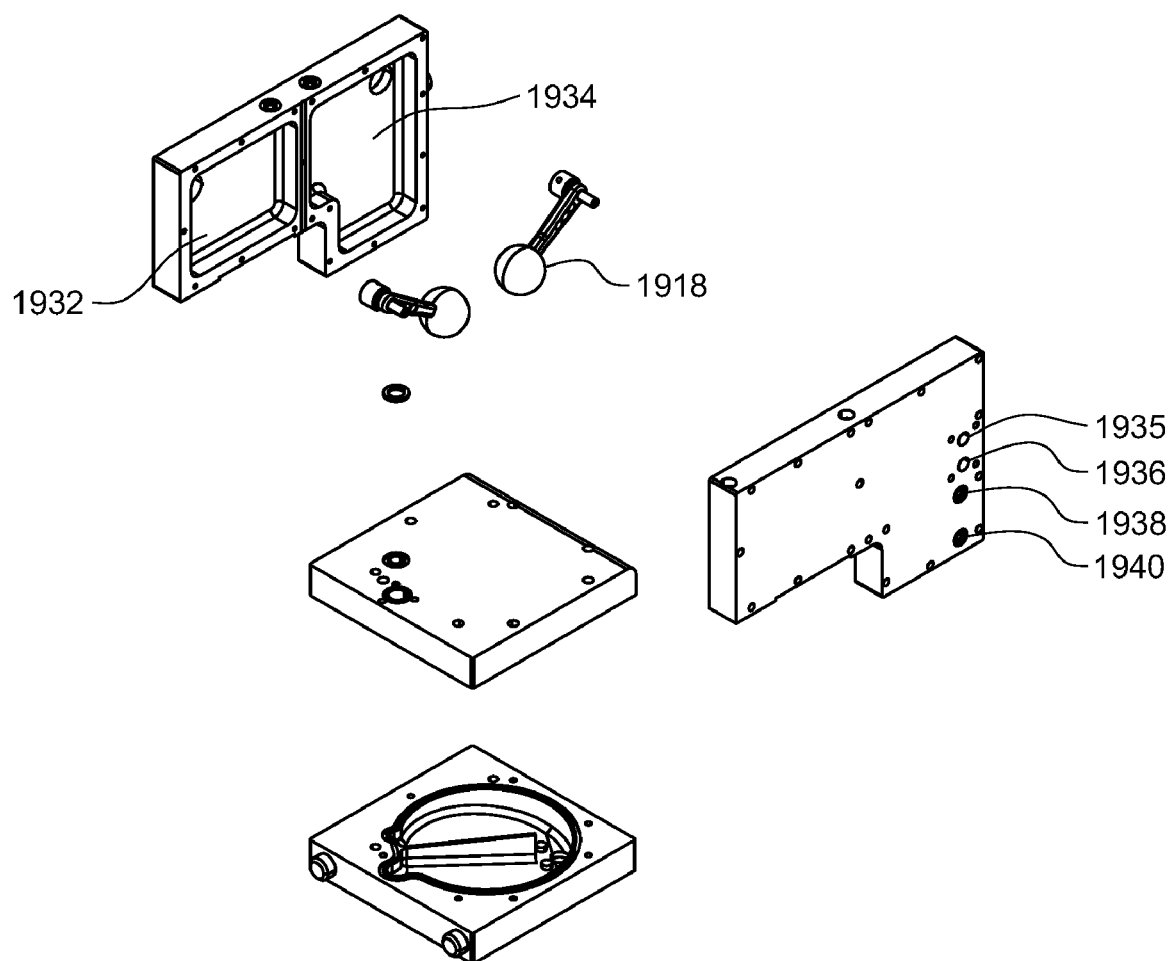


FIG.19E

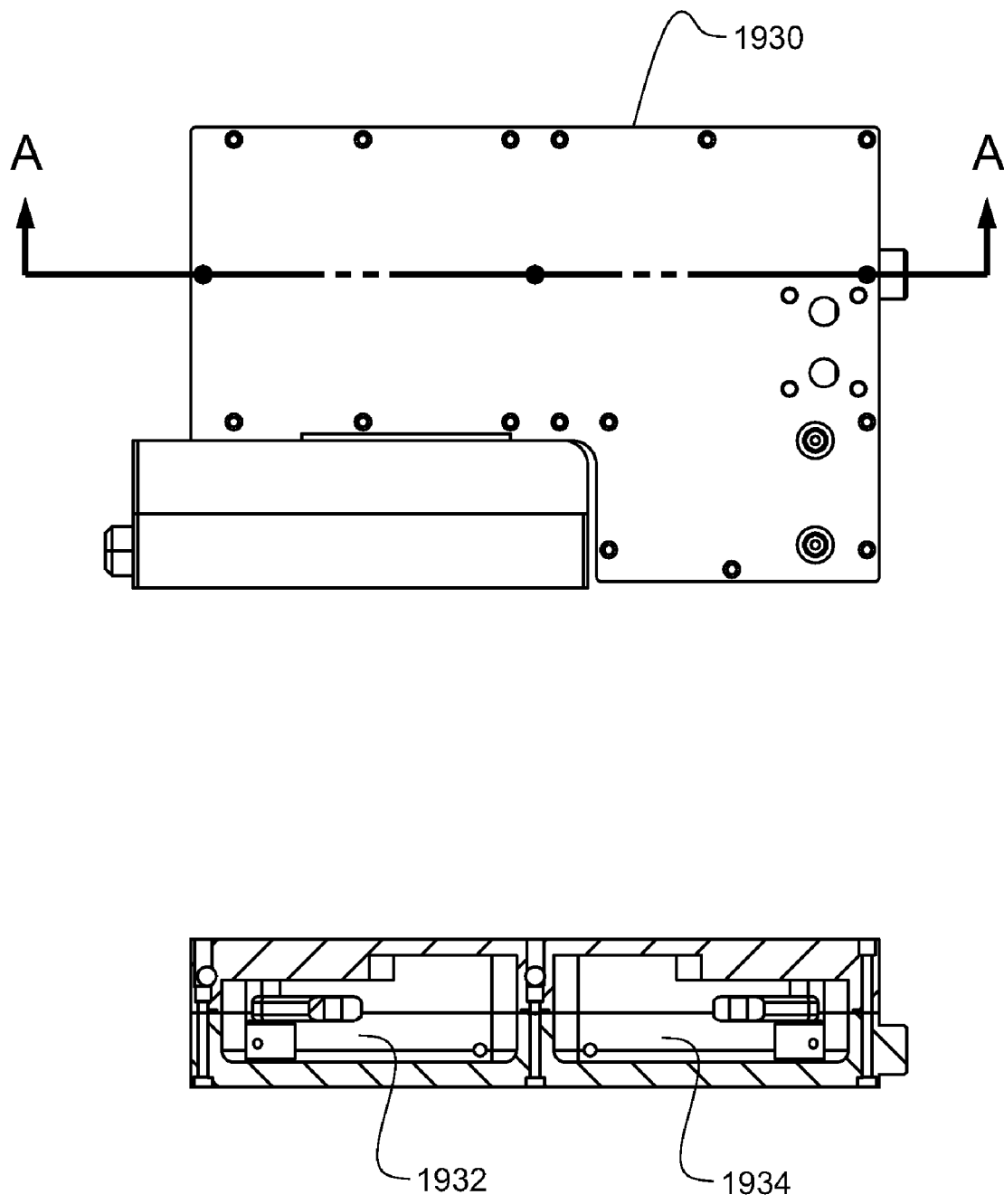


FIG.19F

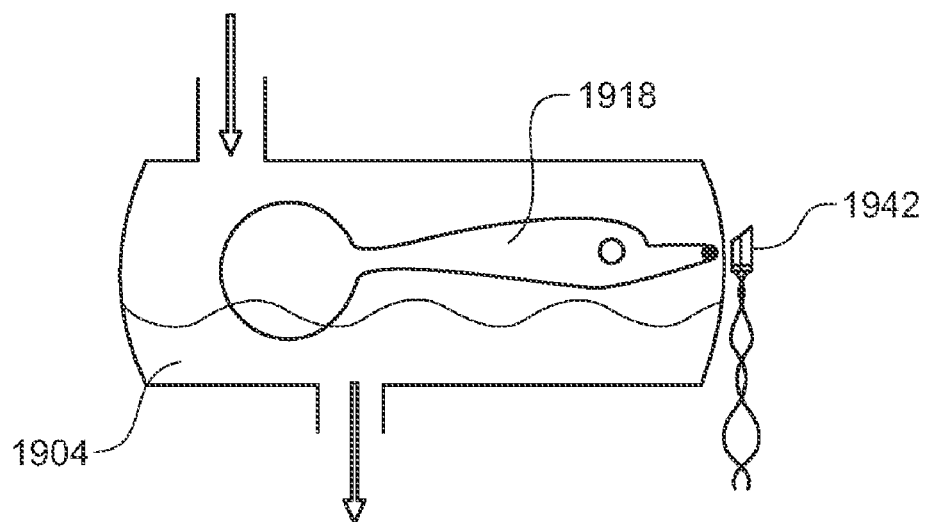


FIG. 19G

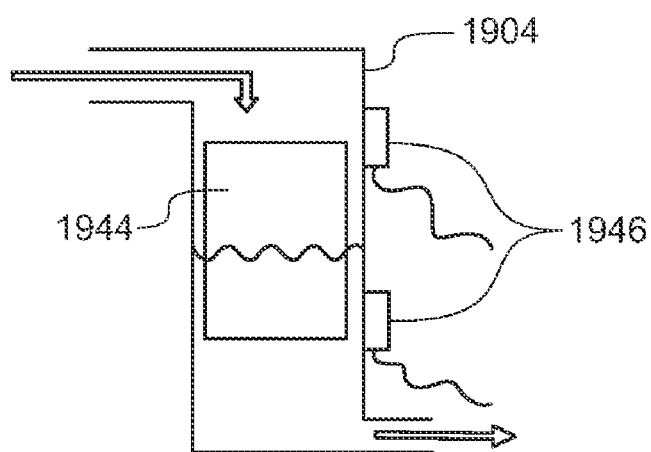


FIG. 19H

2000

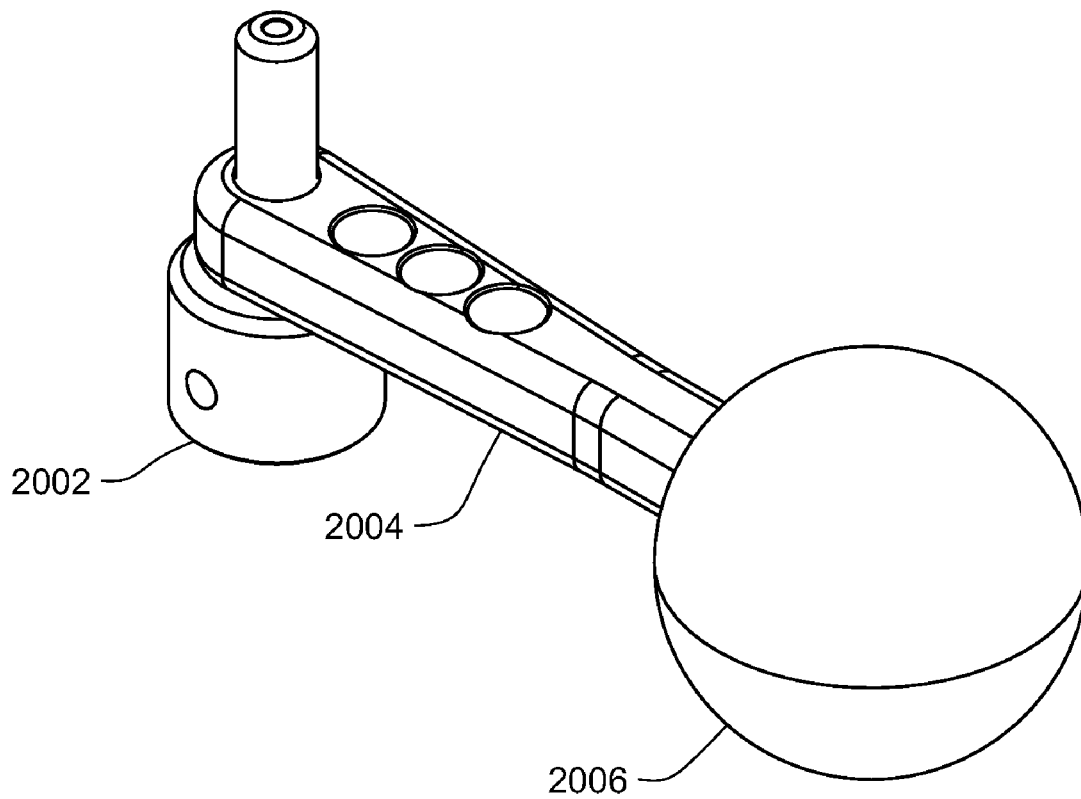


FIG.20

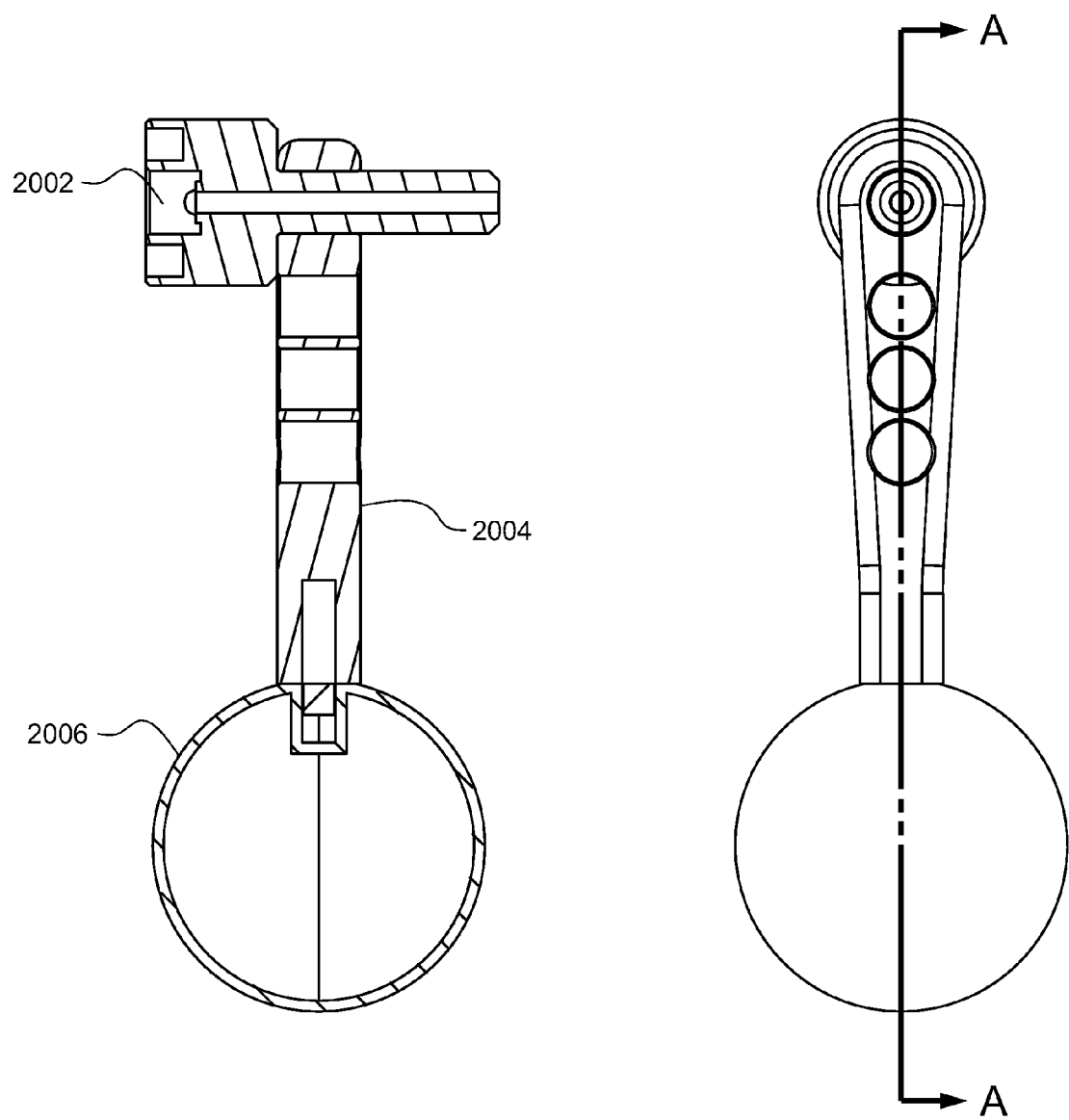


FIG.20A

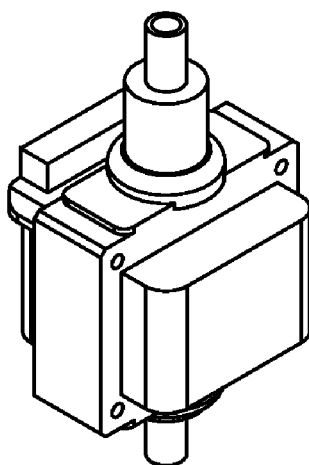


FIG. 21A

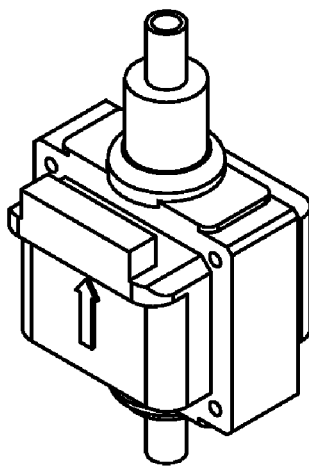


FIG. 21

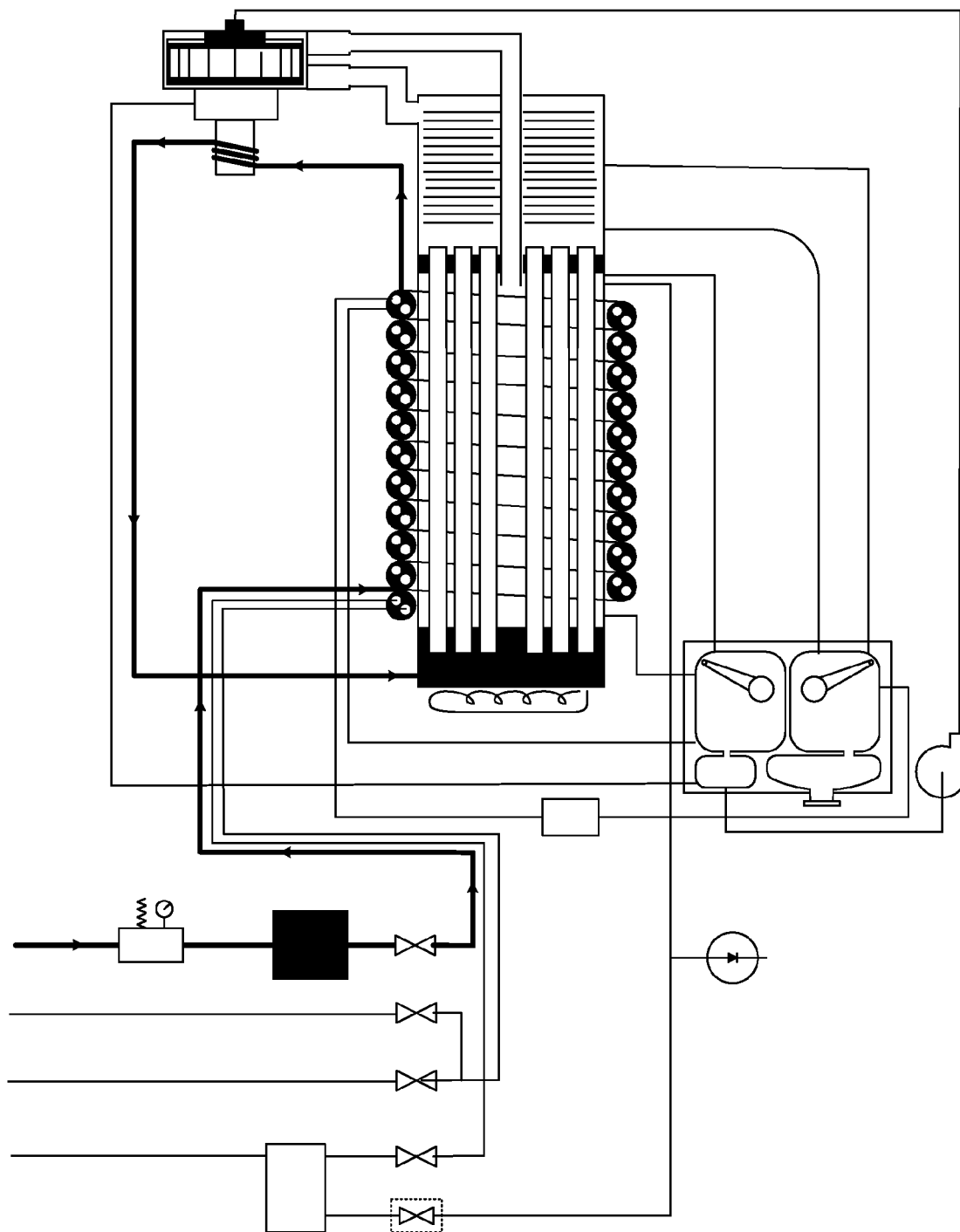


FIG. 22

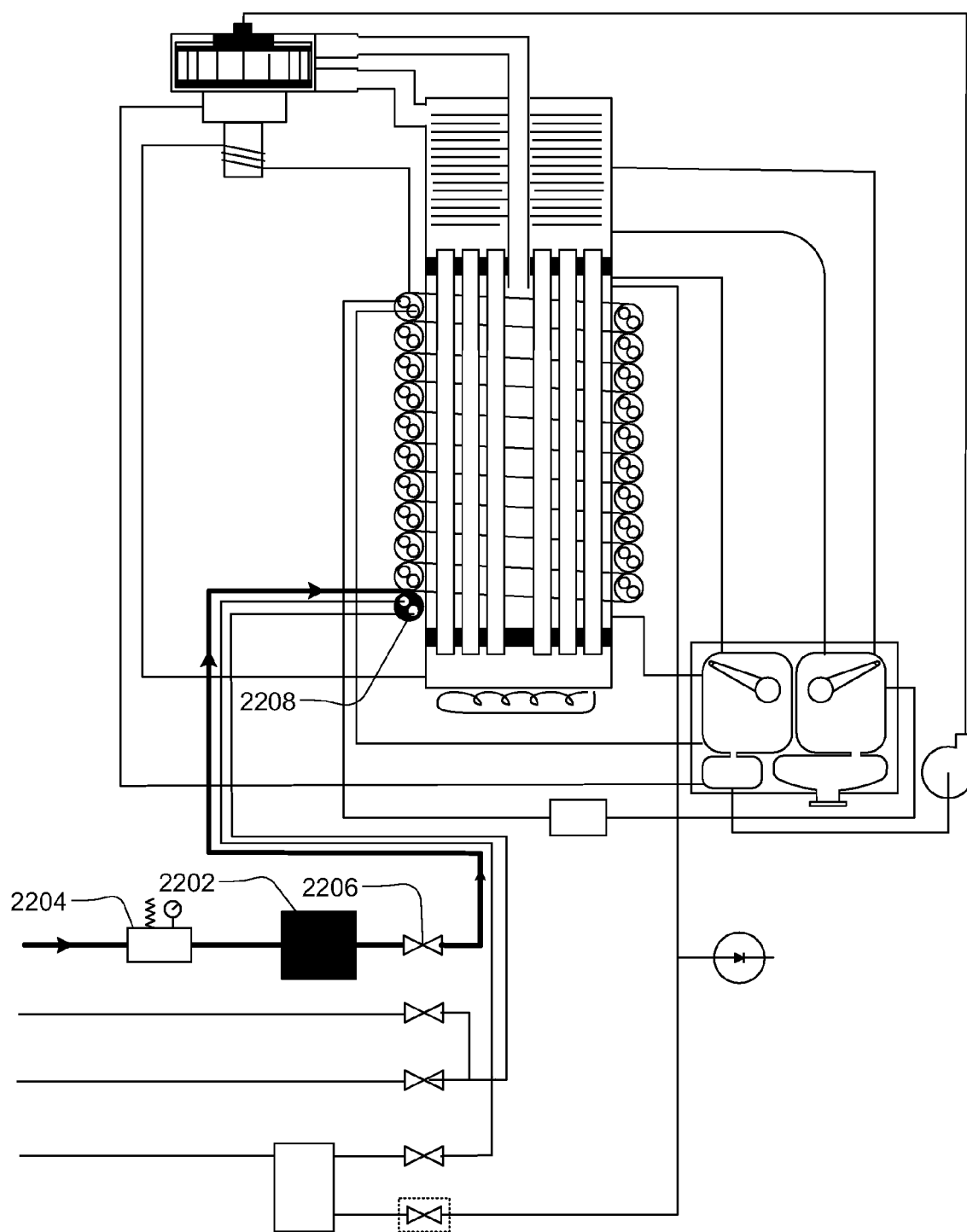


FIG. 22A

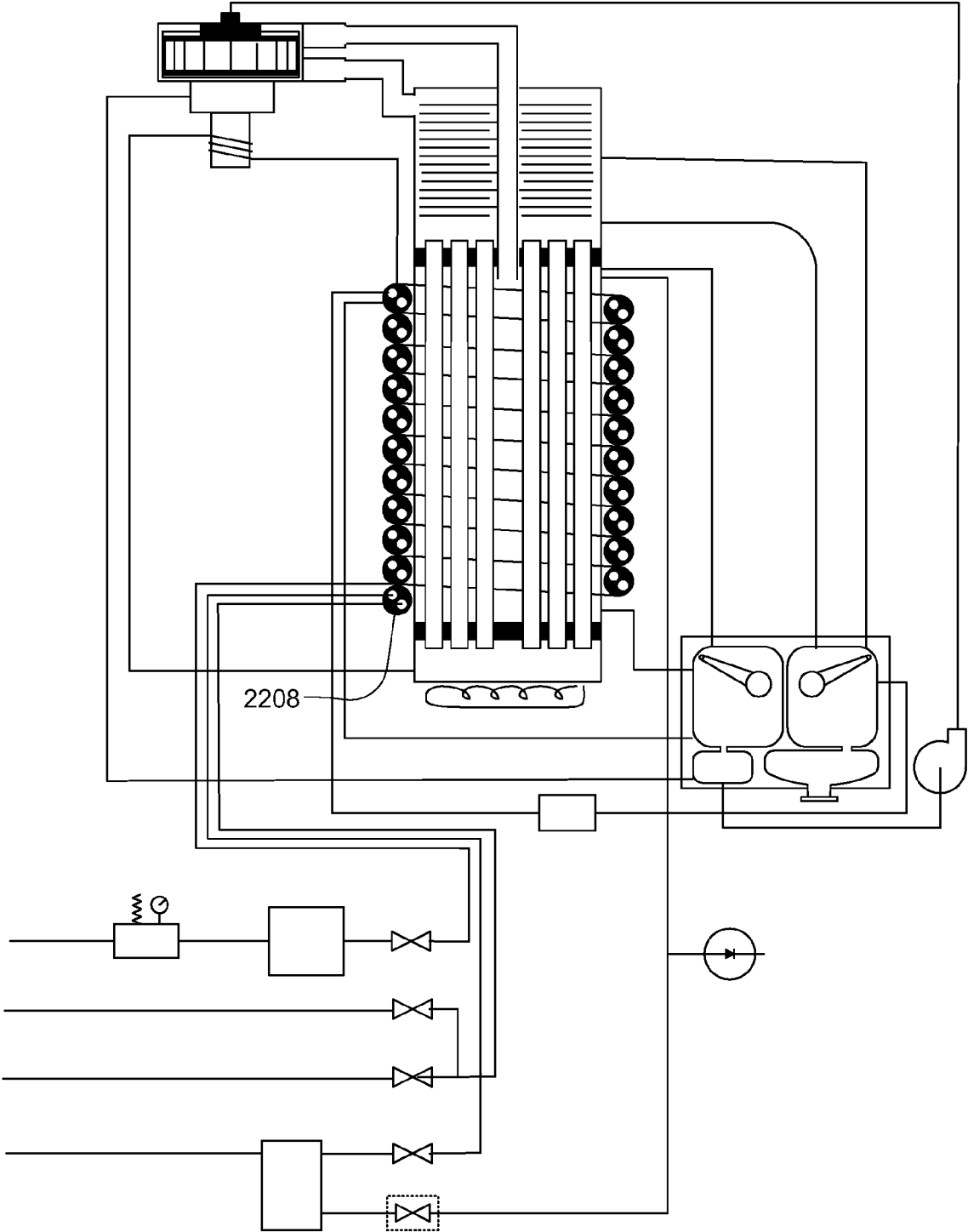


FIG. 22B

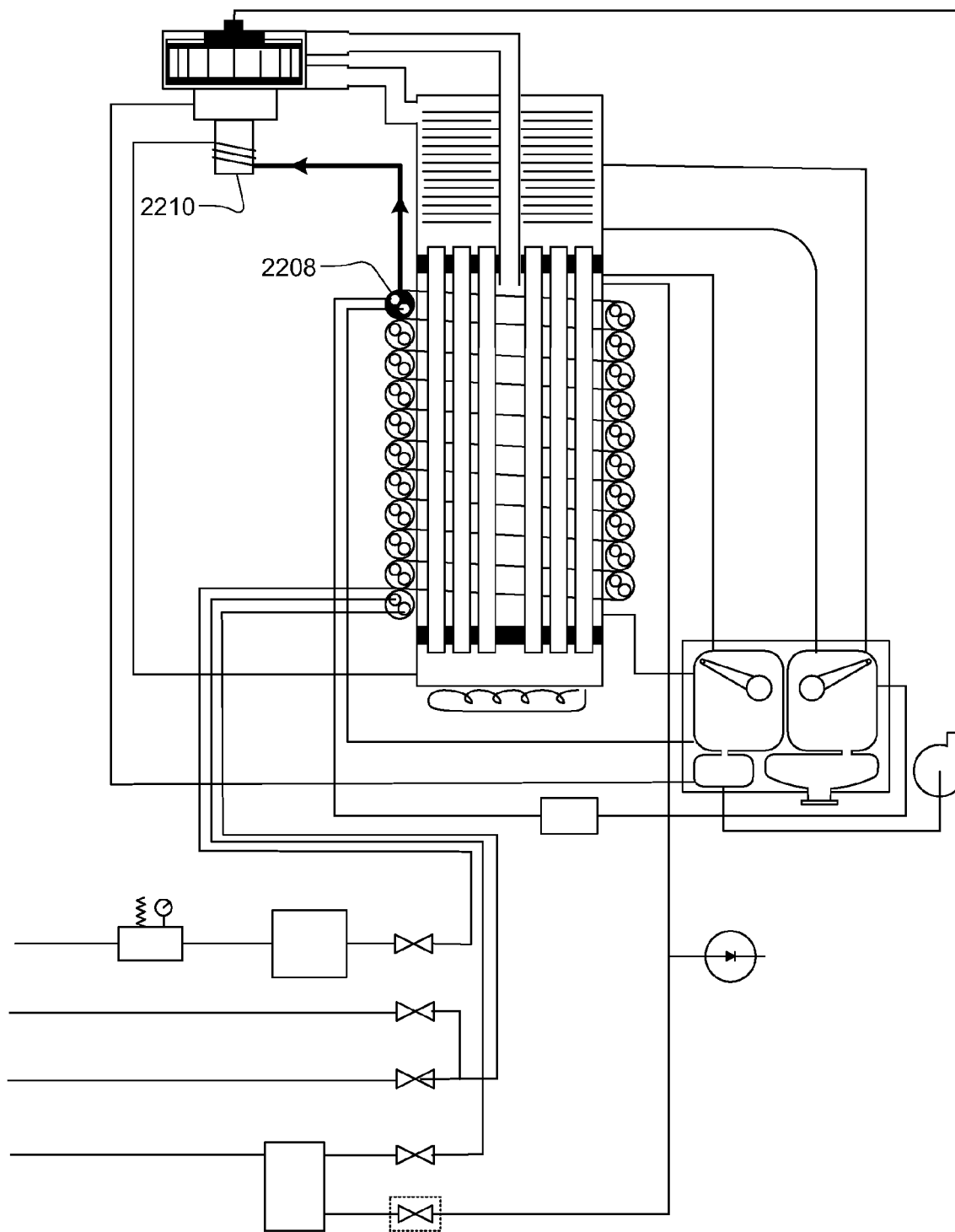


FIG. 22C

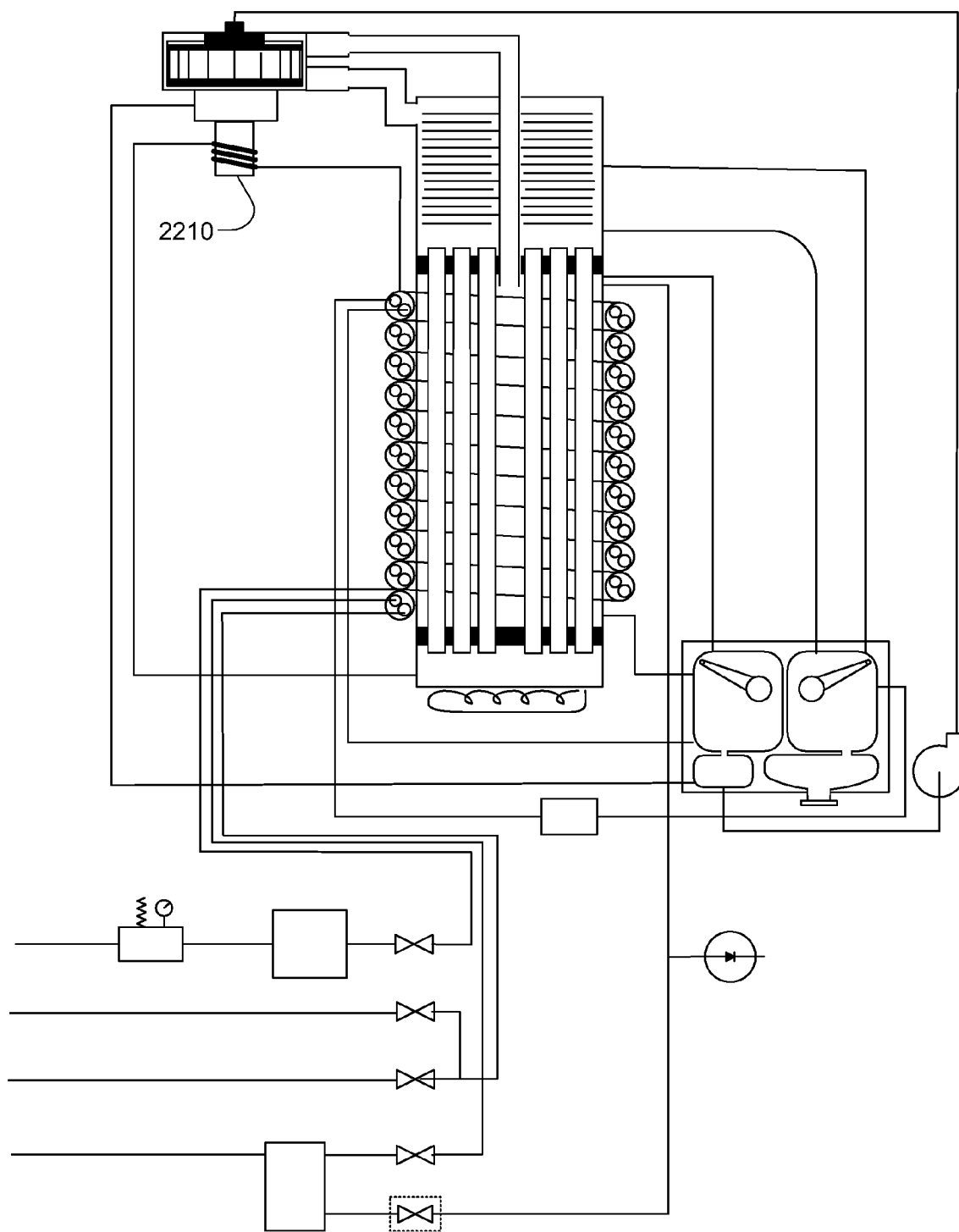


FIG. 22D

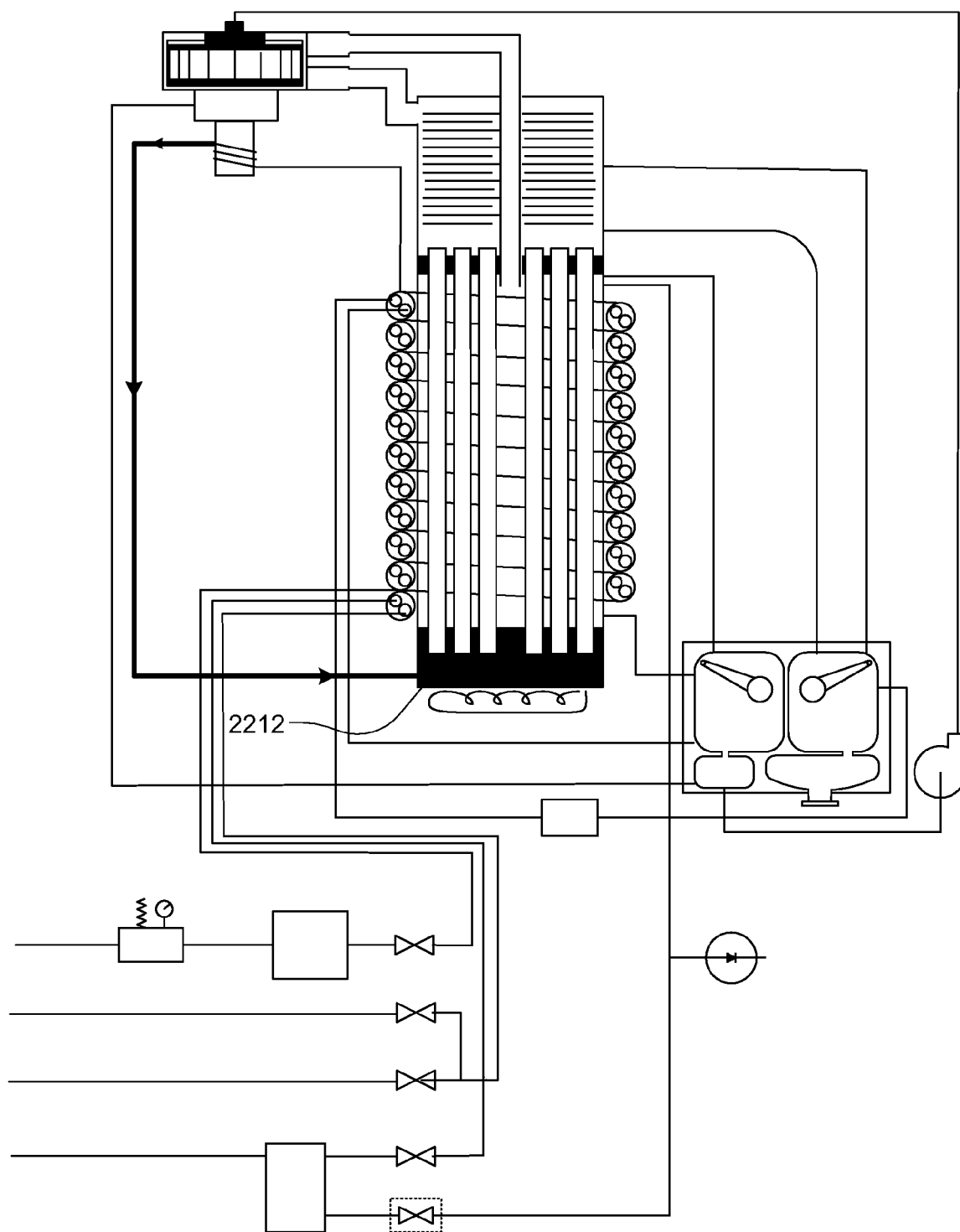


FIG. 22E

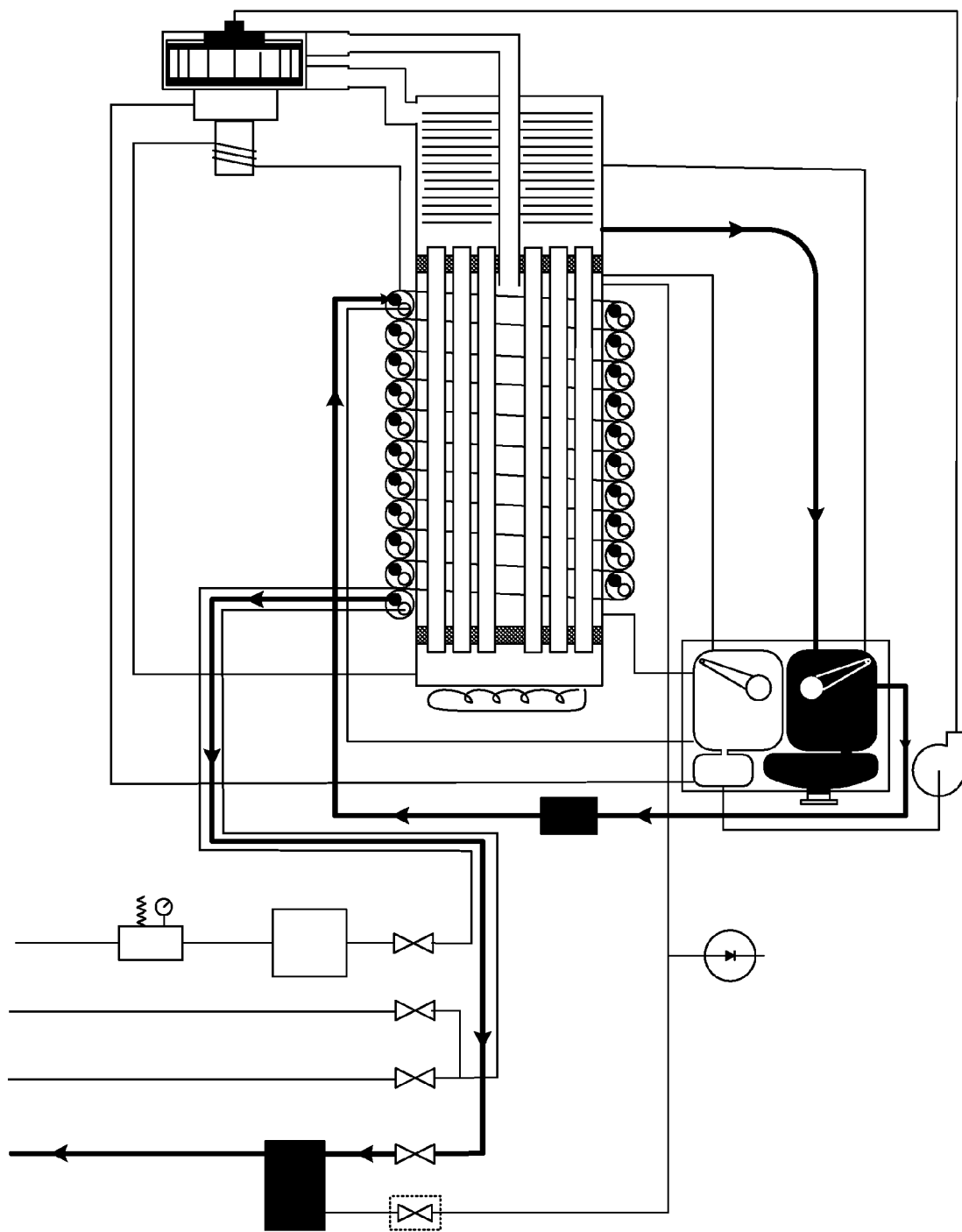


FIG. 23

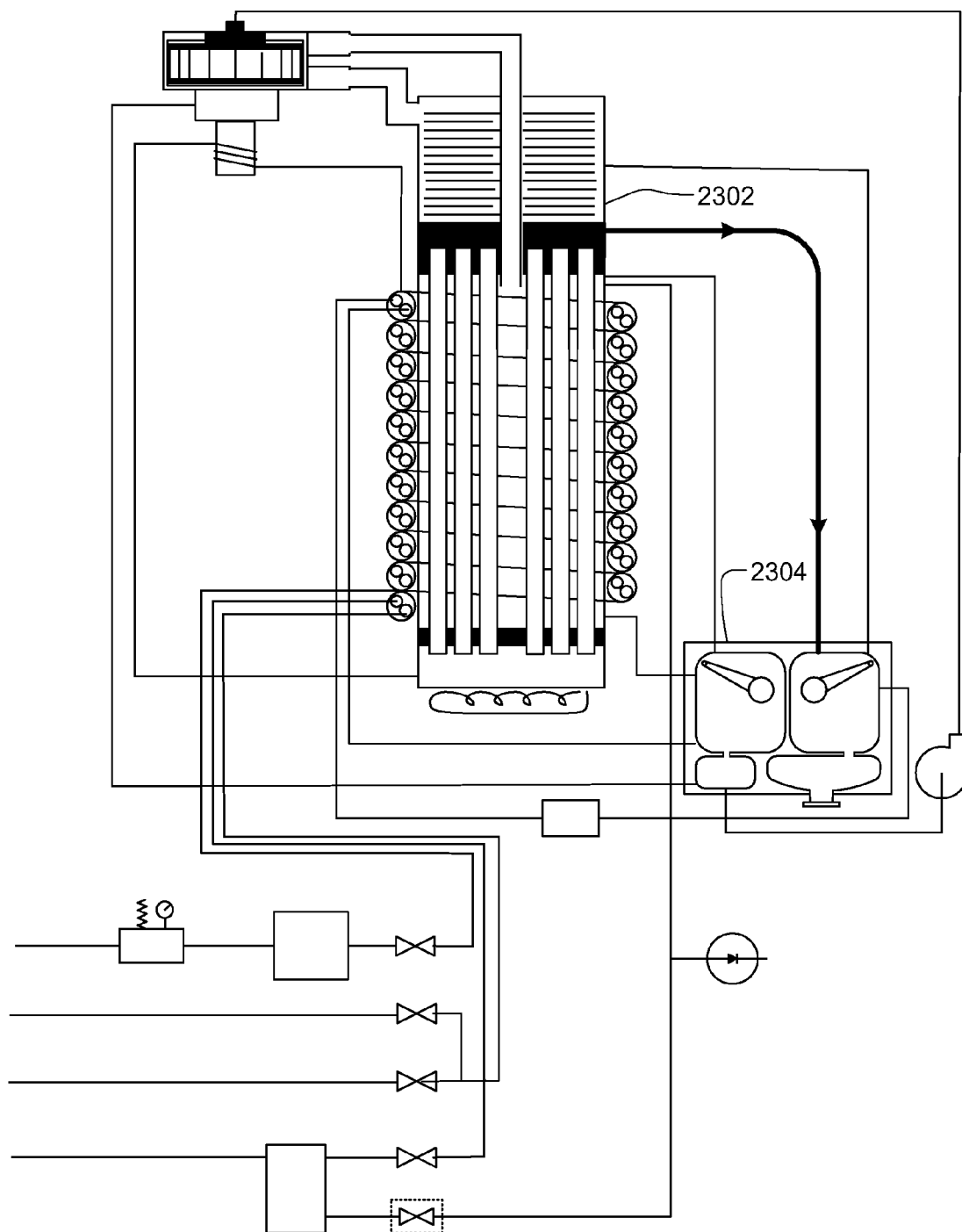


FIG. 23A

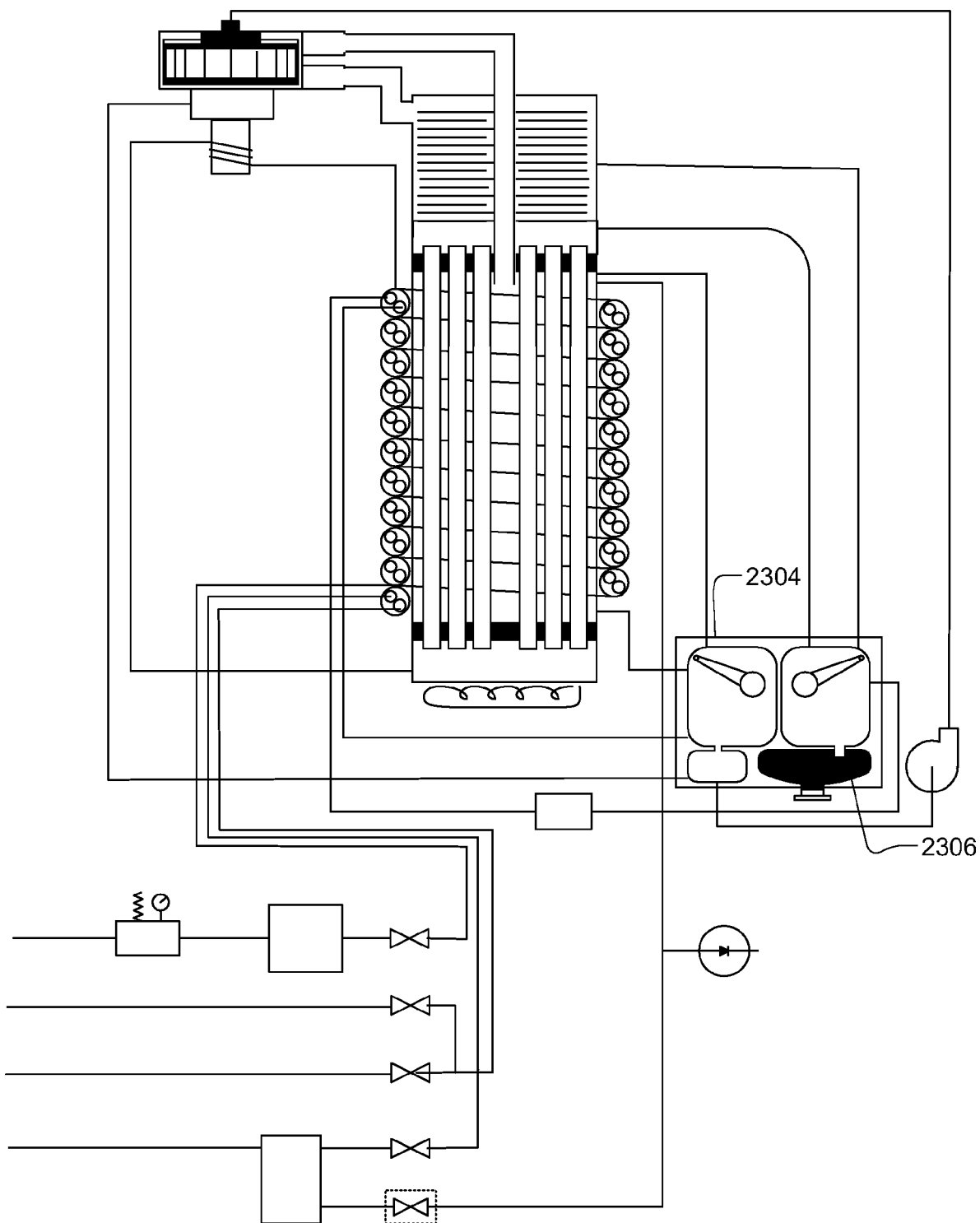


FIG. 23B

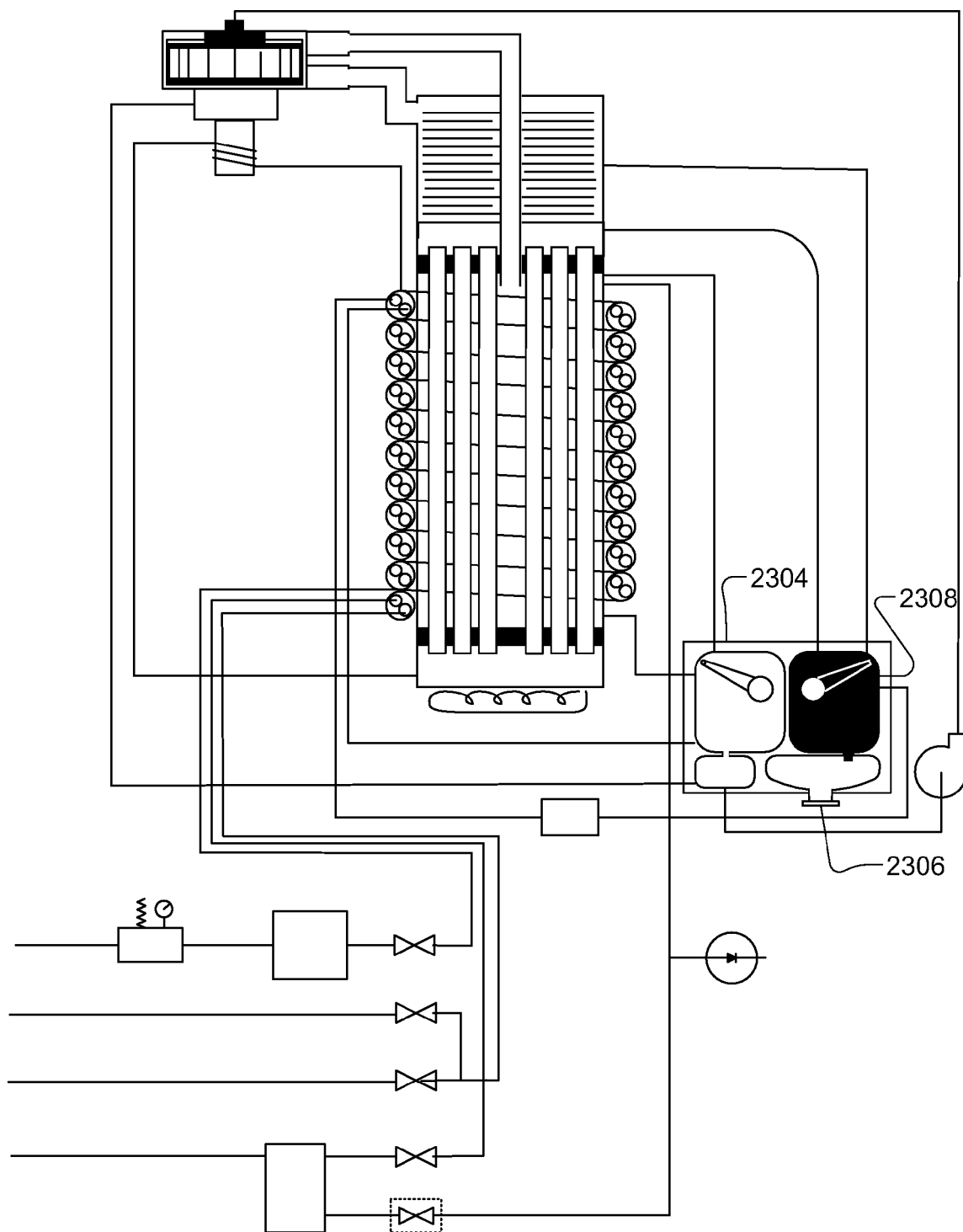


FIG. 23C

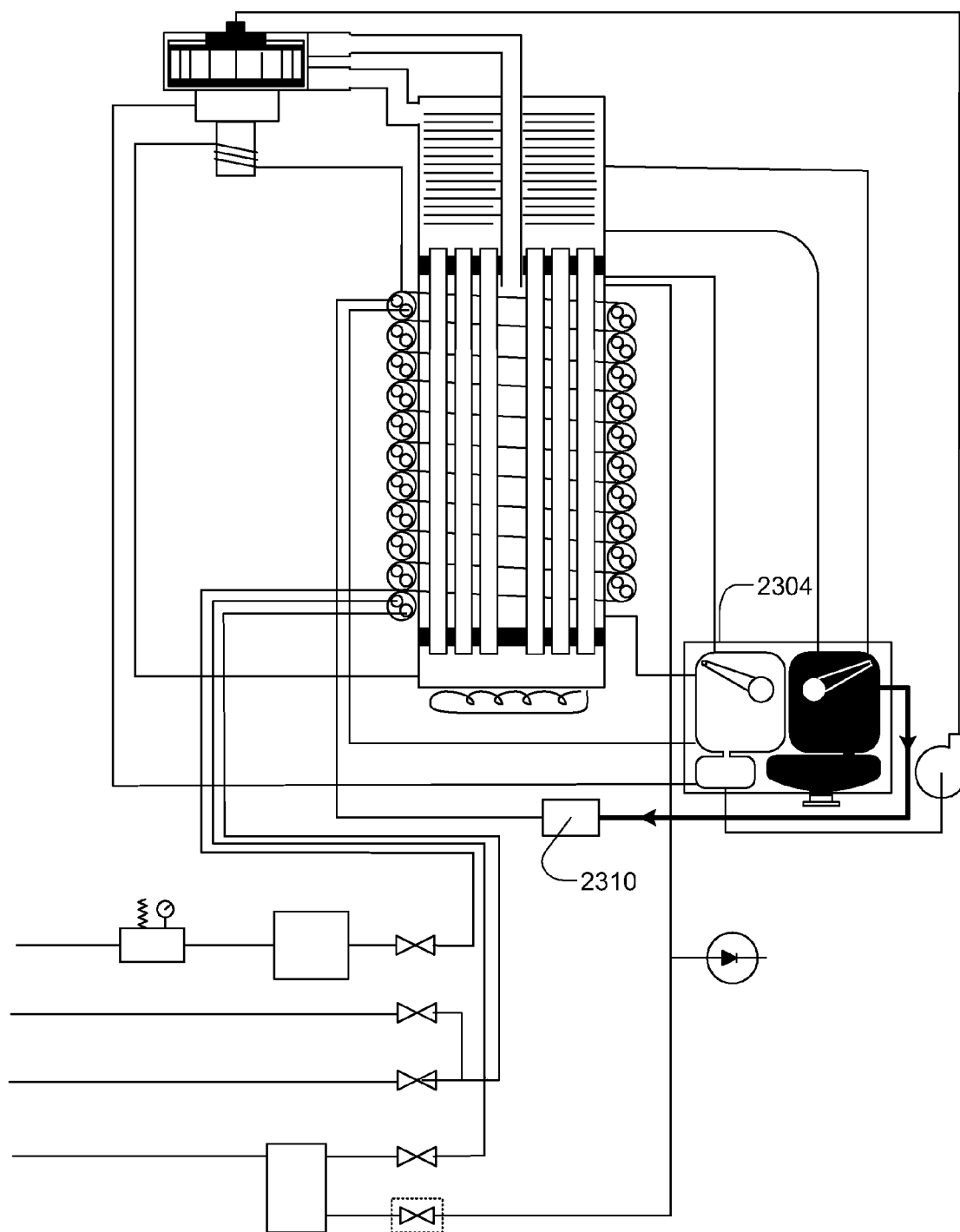


FIG. 23D

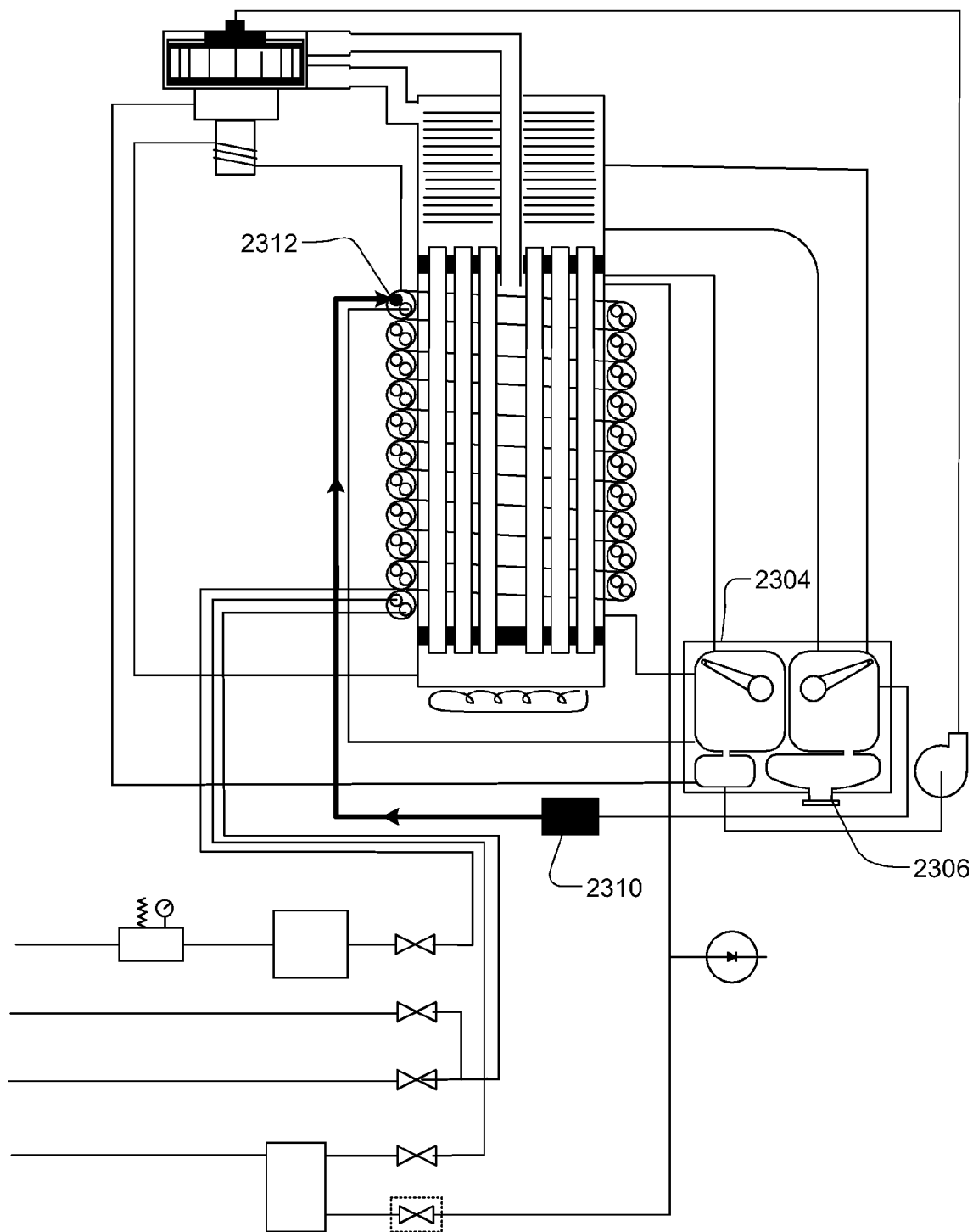


FIG. 23E

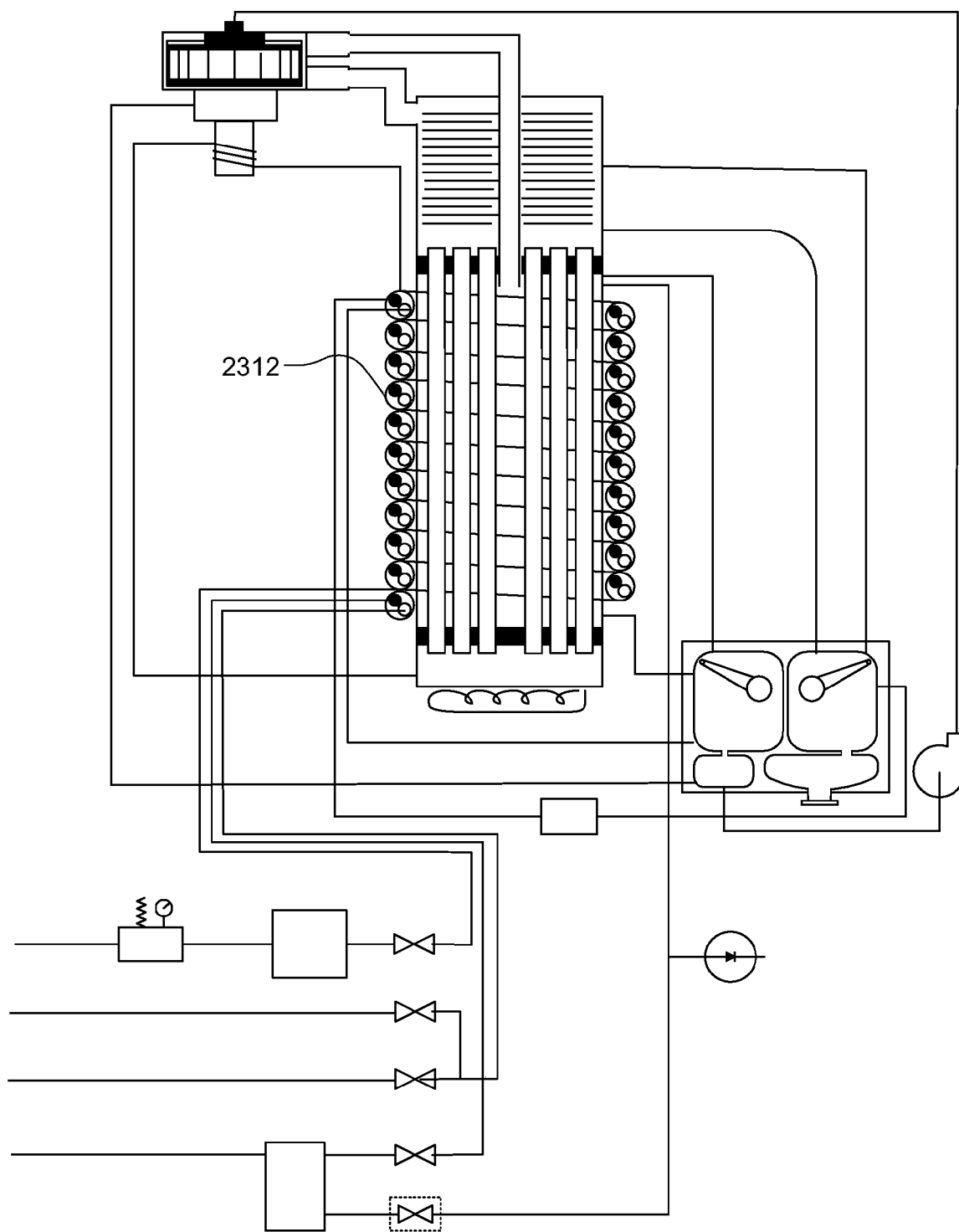


FIG. 23F

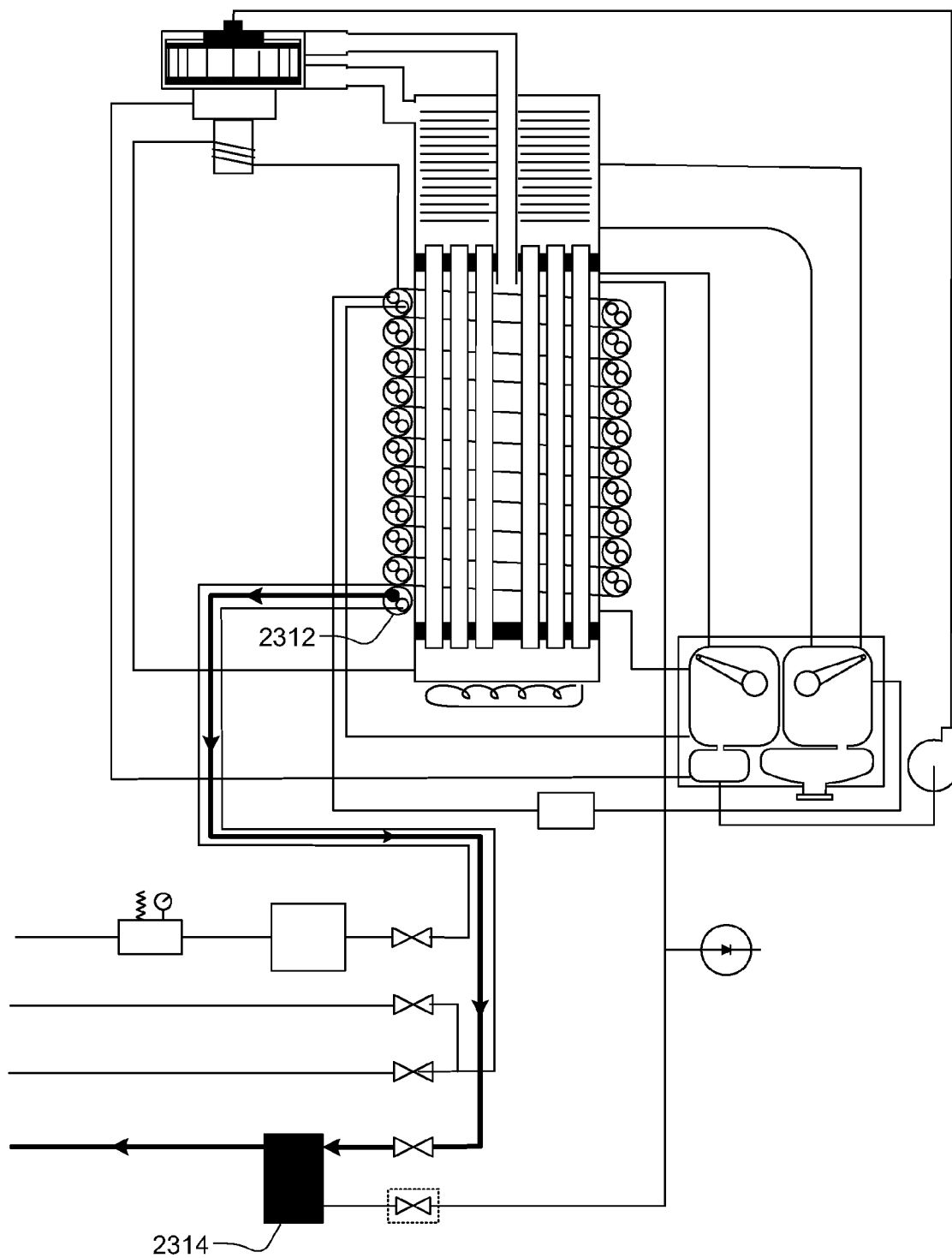


FIG. 23G

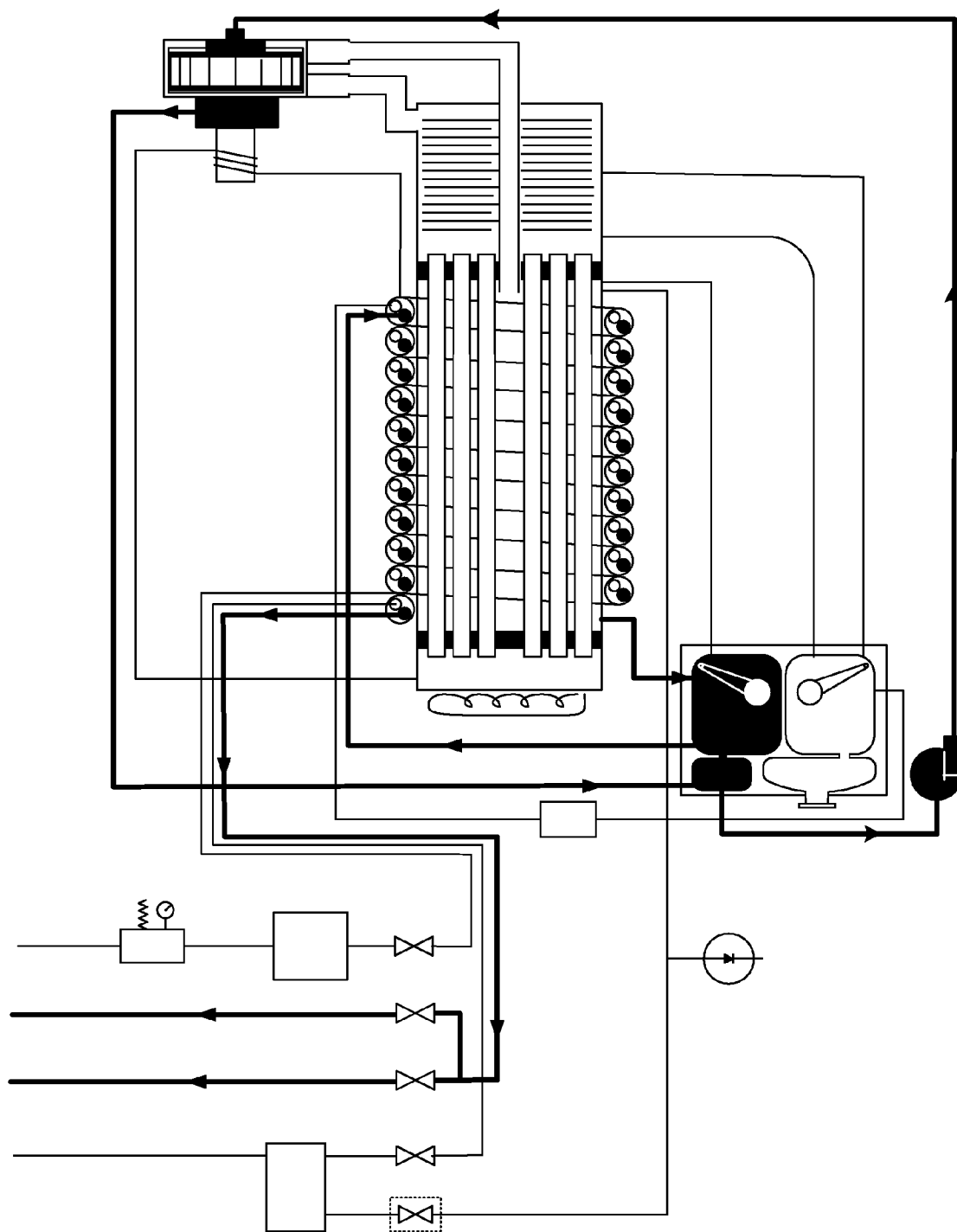


FIG. 24

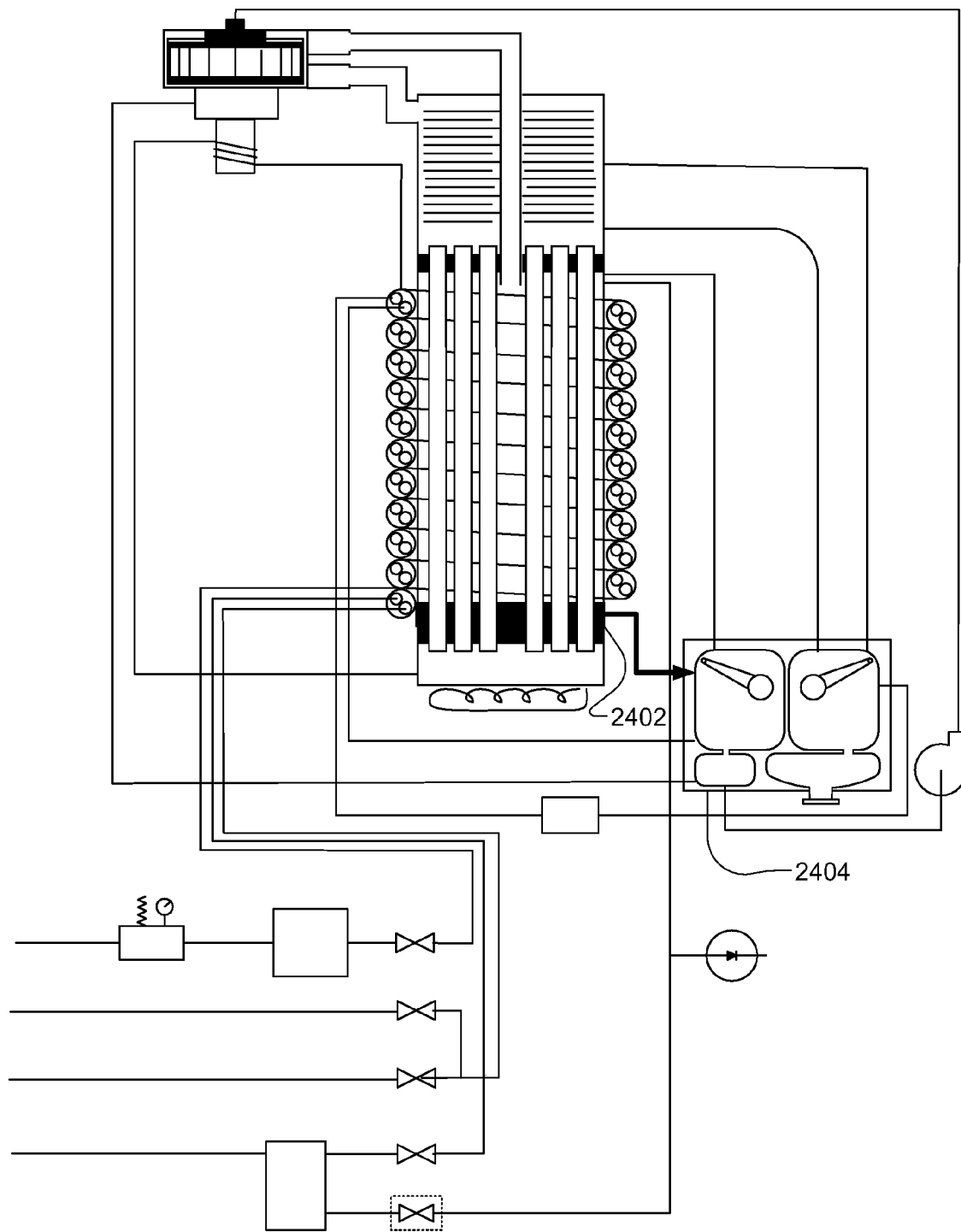


FIG. 24A

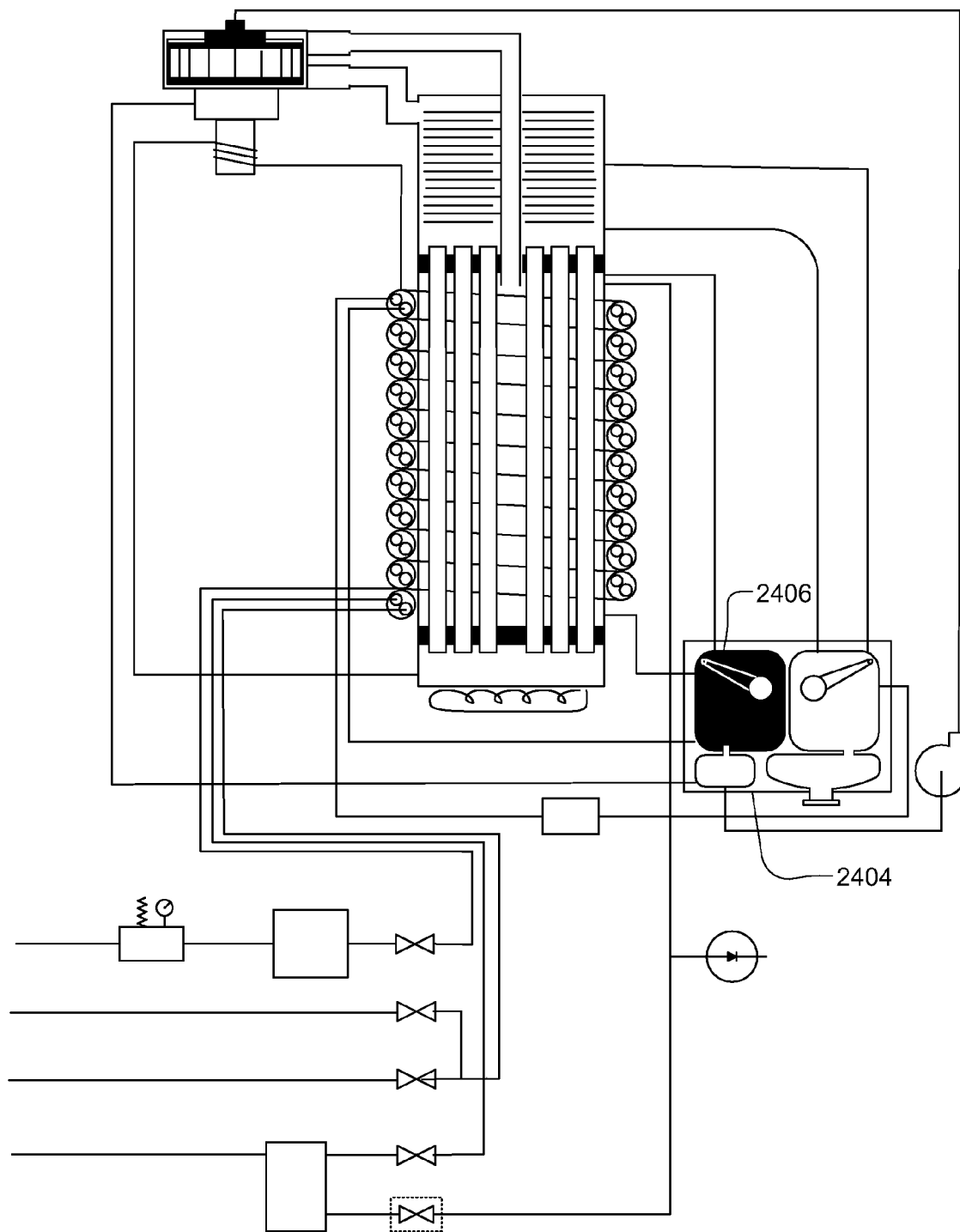


FIG. 24B

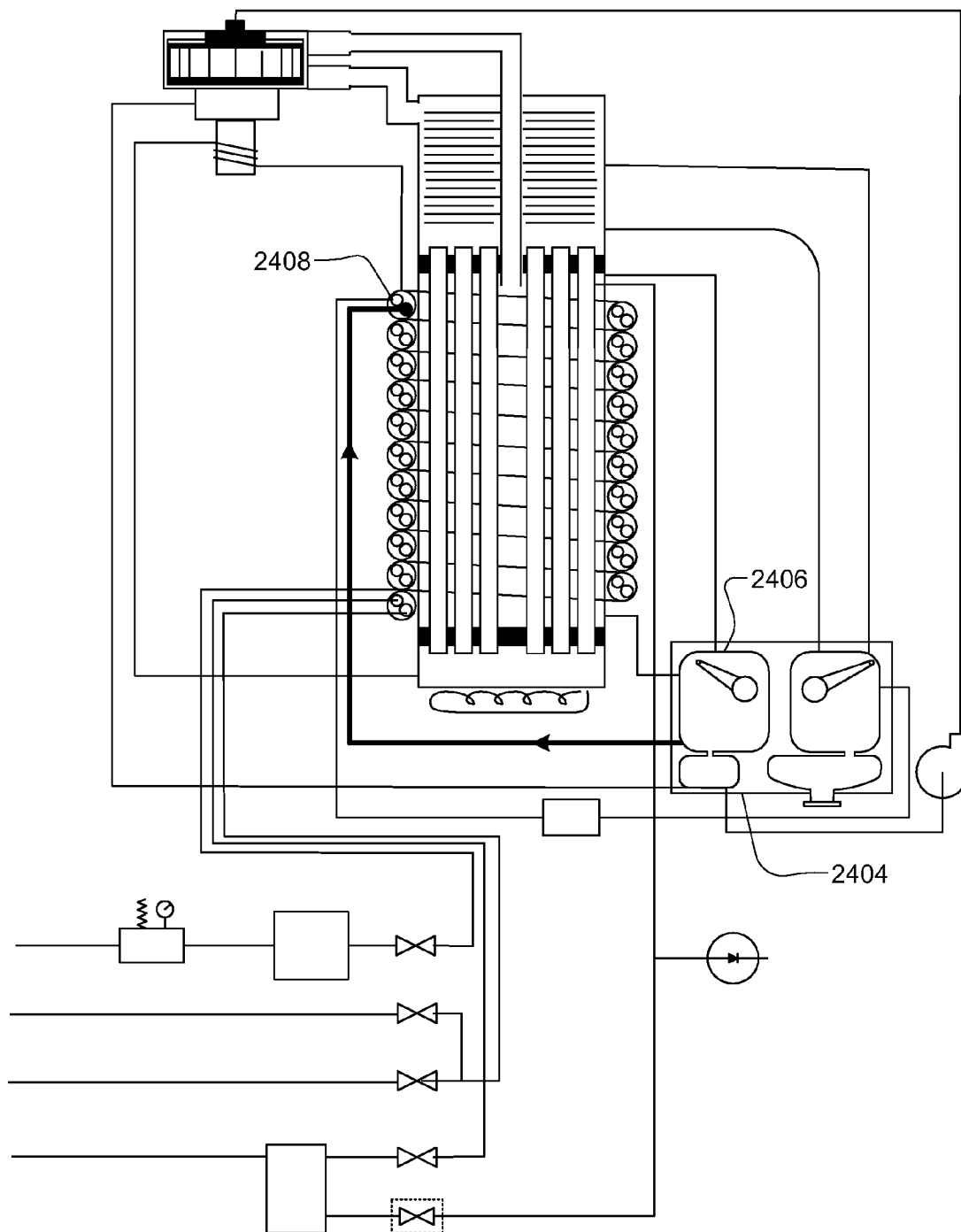


FIG. 24C

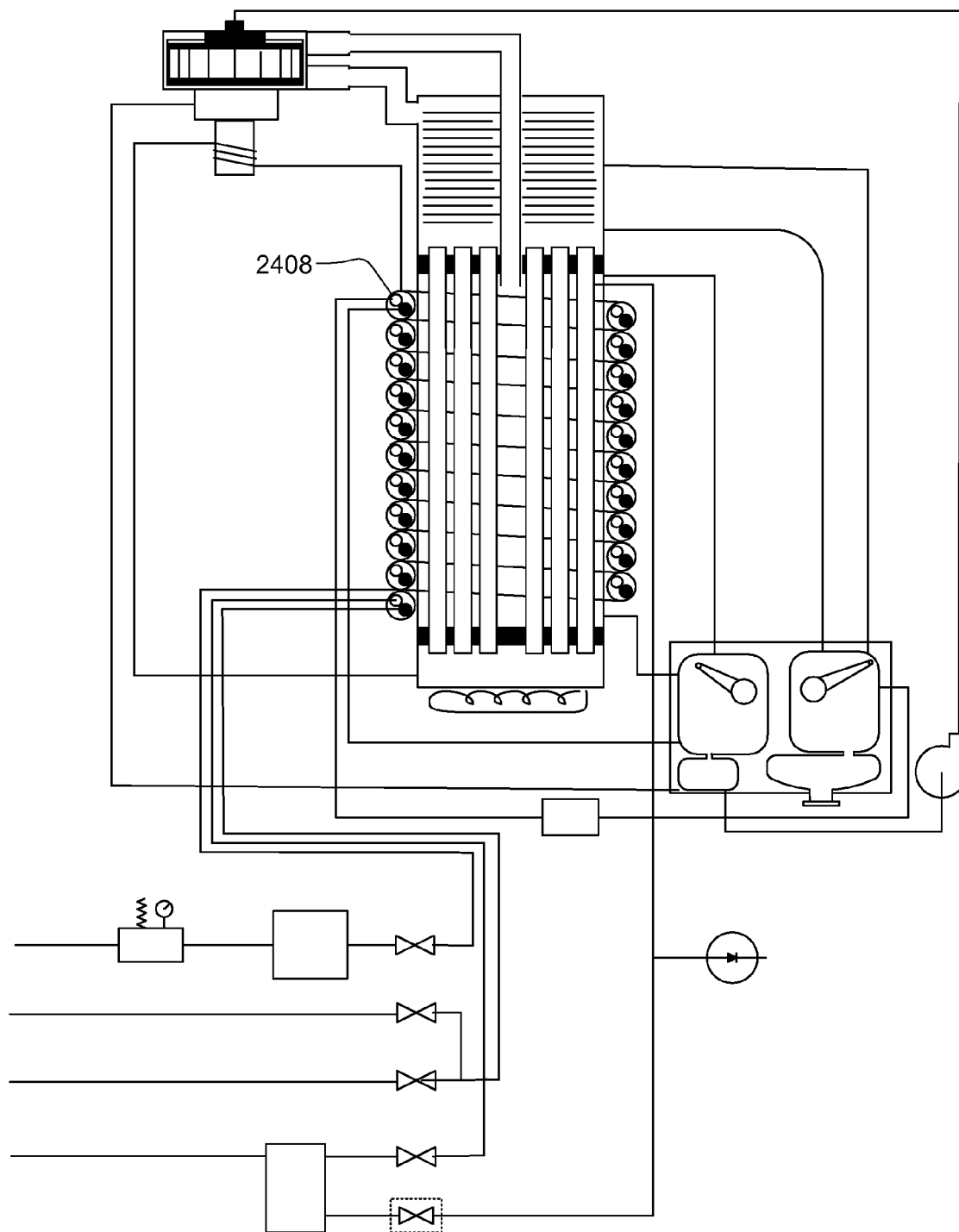


FIG. 24D

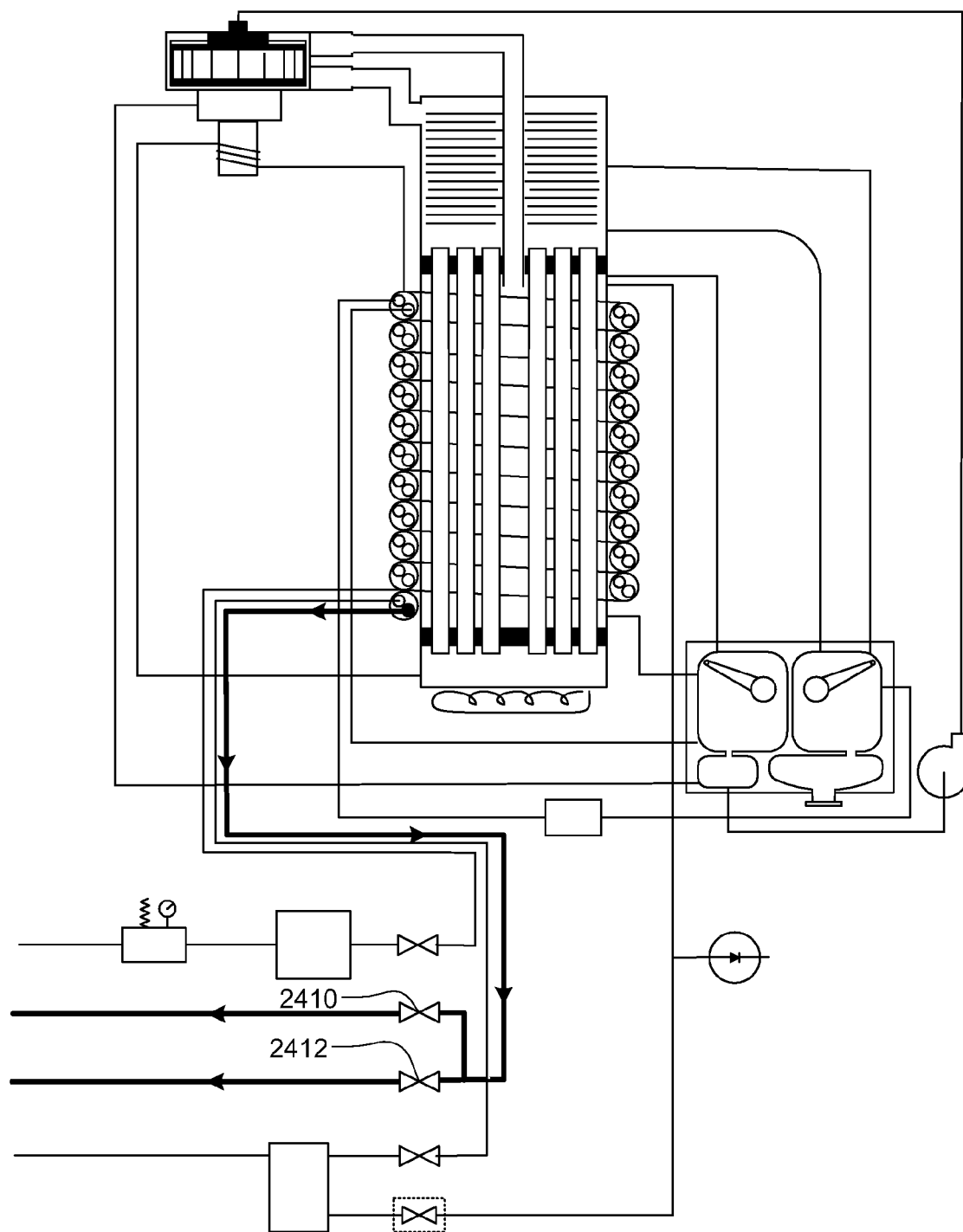


FIG. 24E

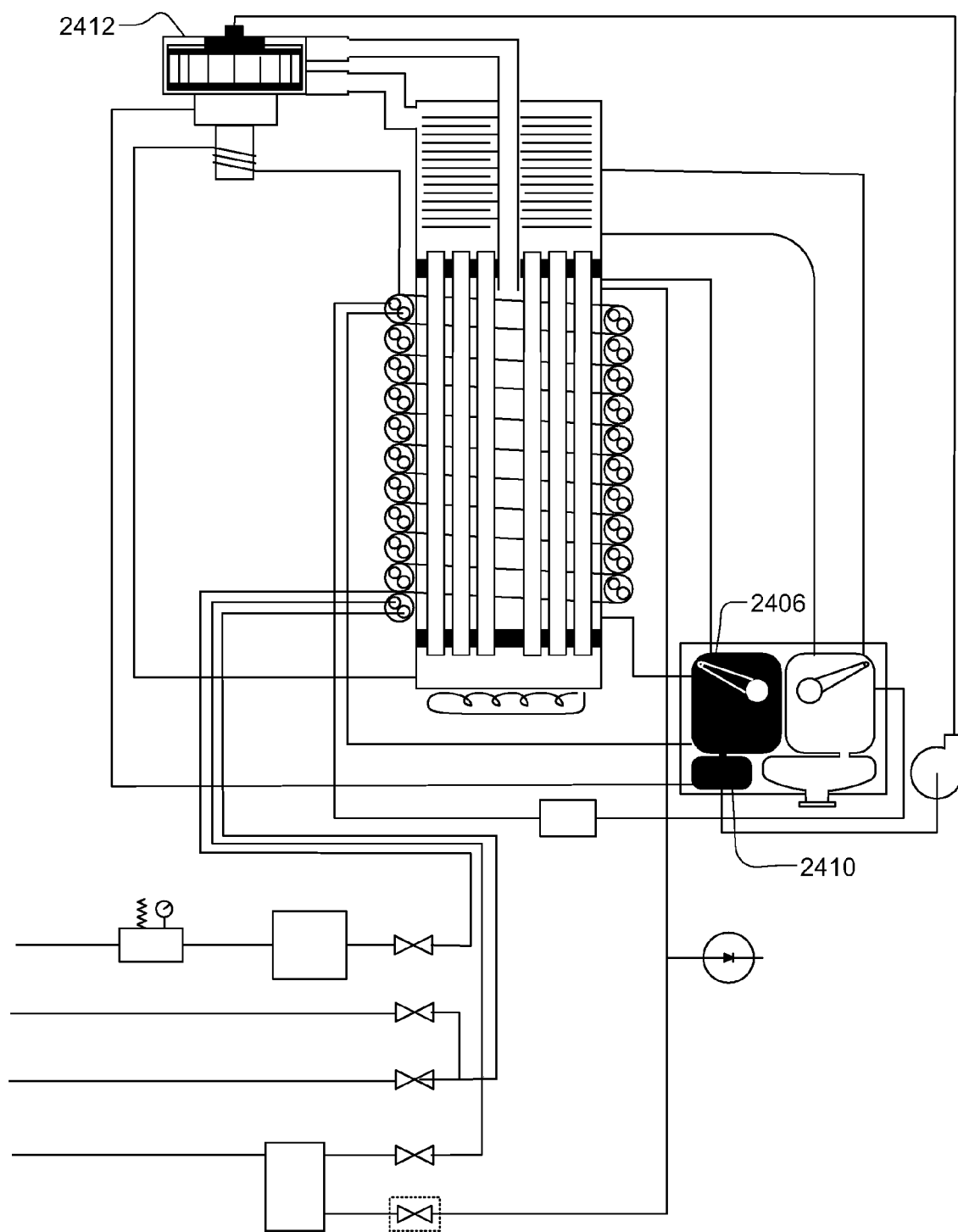


FIG. 24F

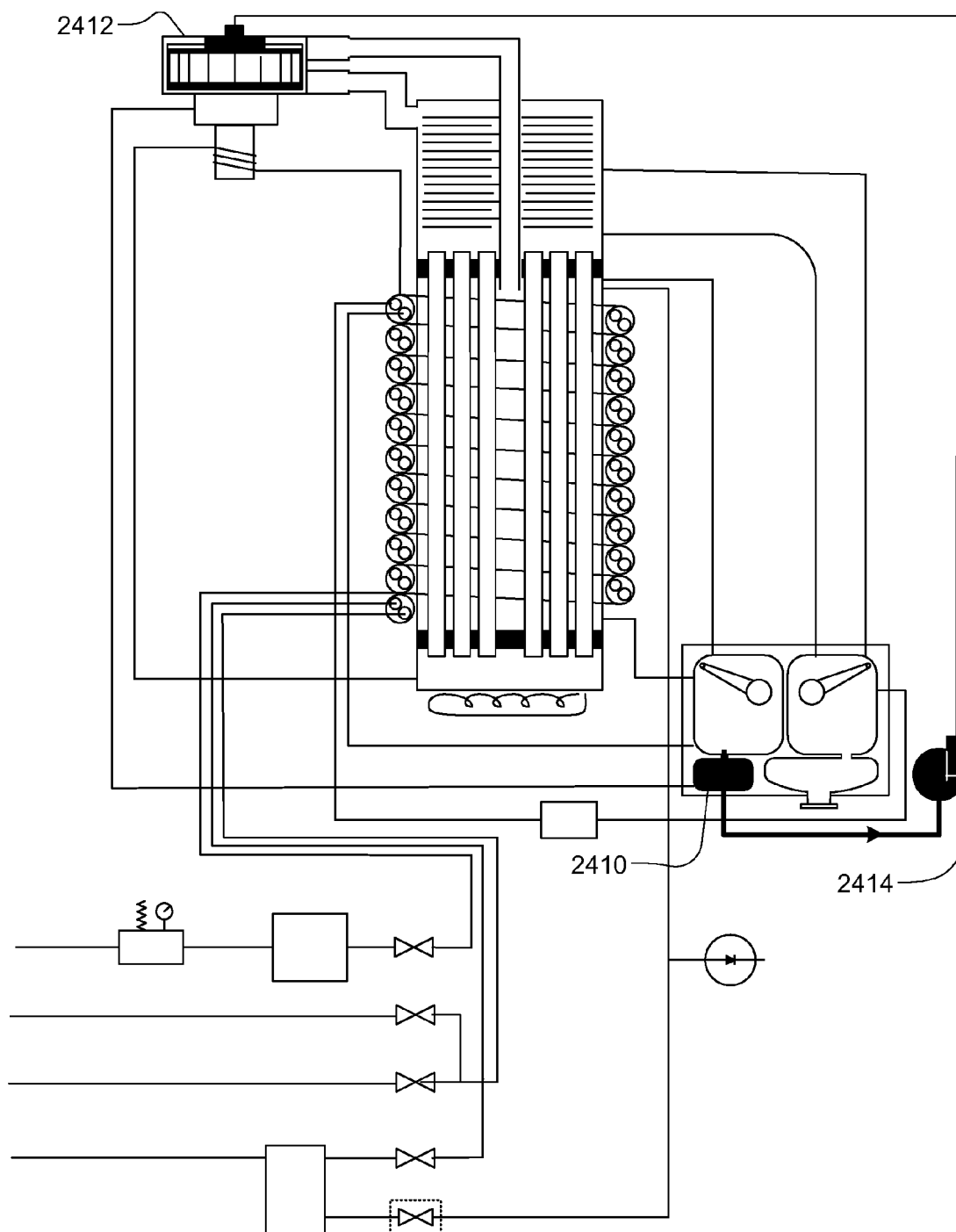


FIG. 24G

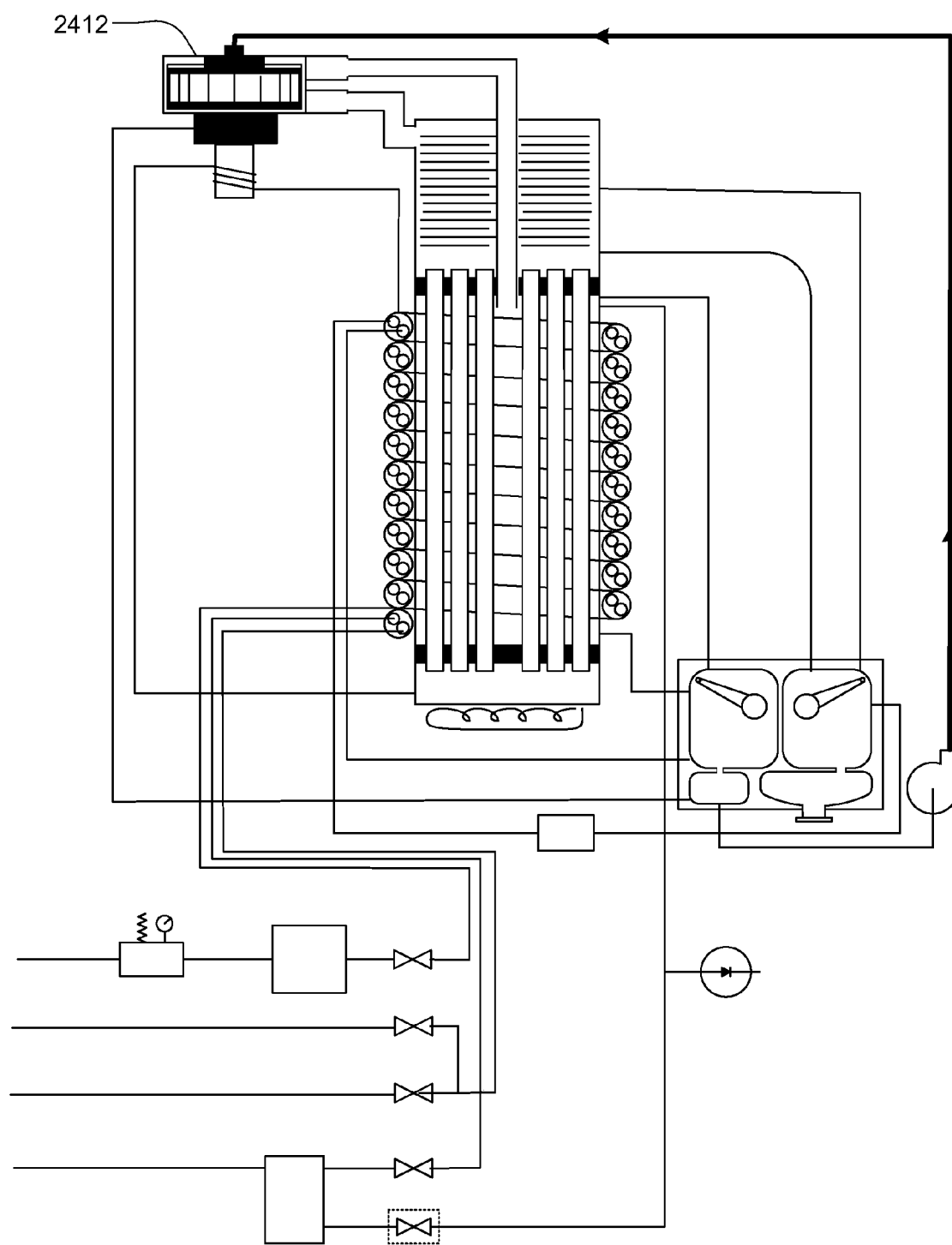


FIG. 24H

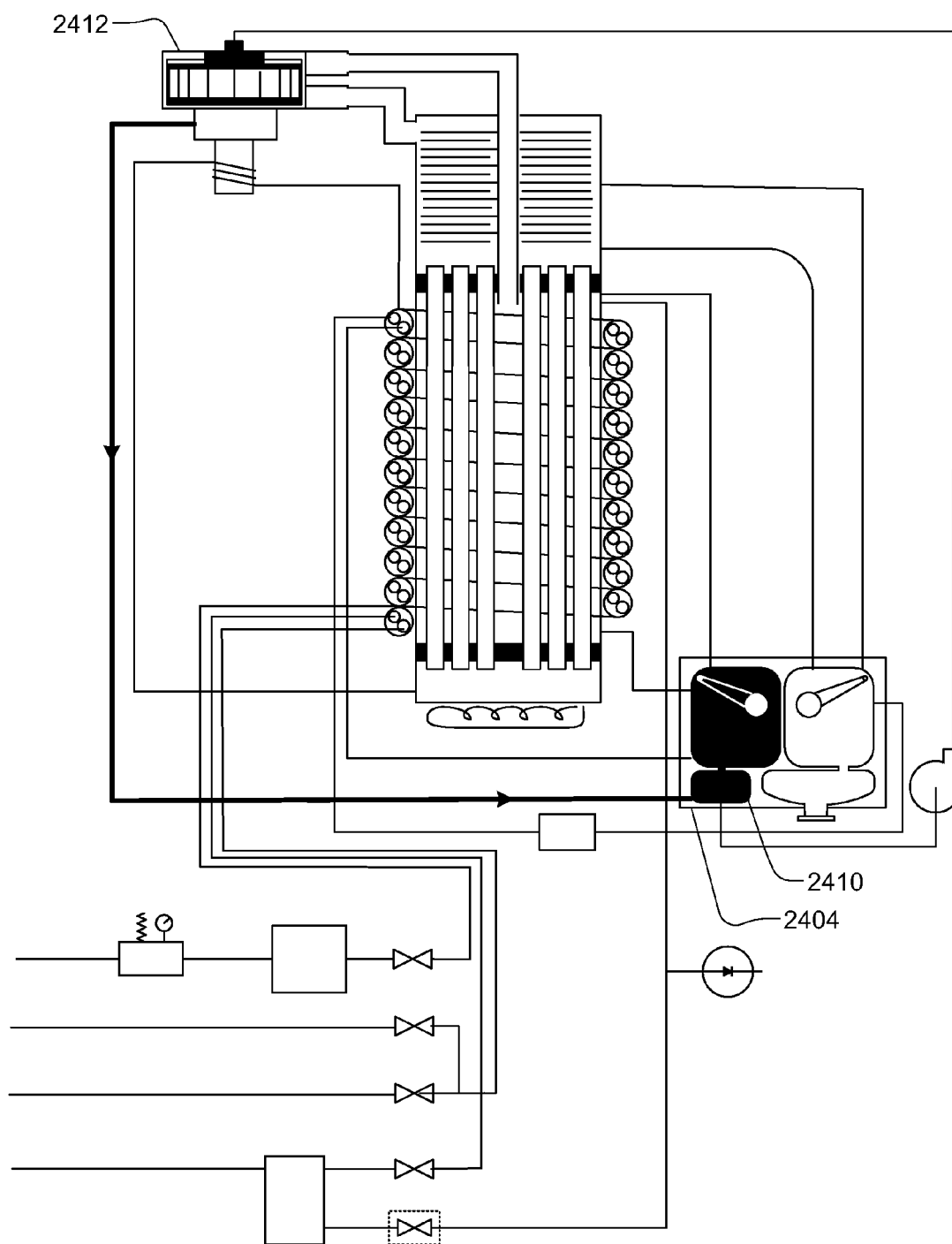


FIG. 24I

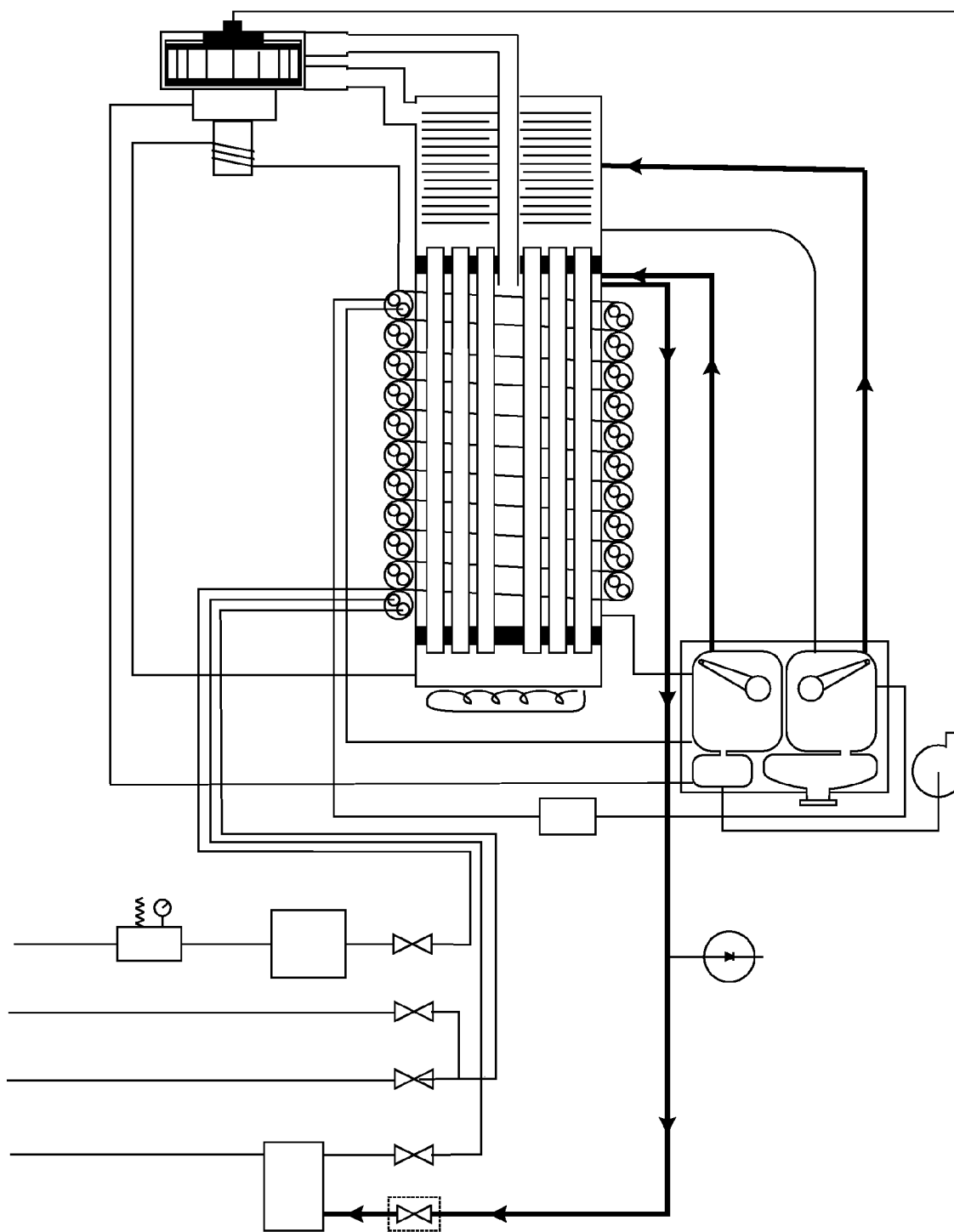


FIG. 25

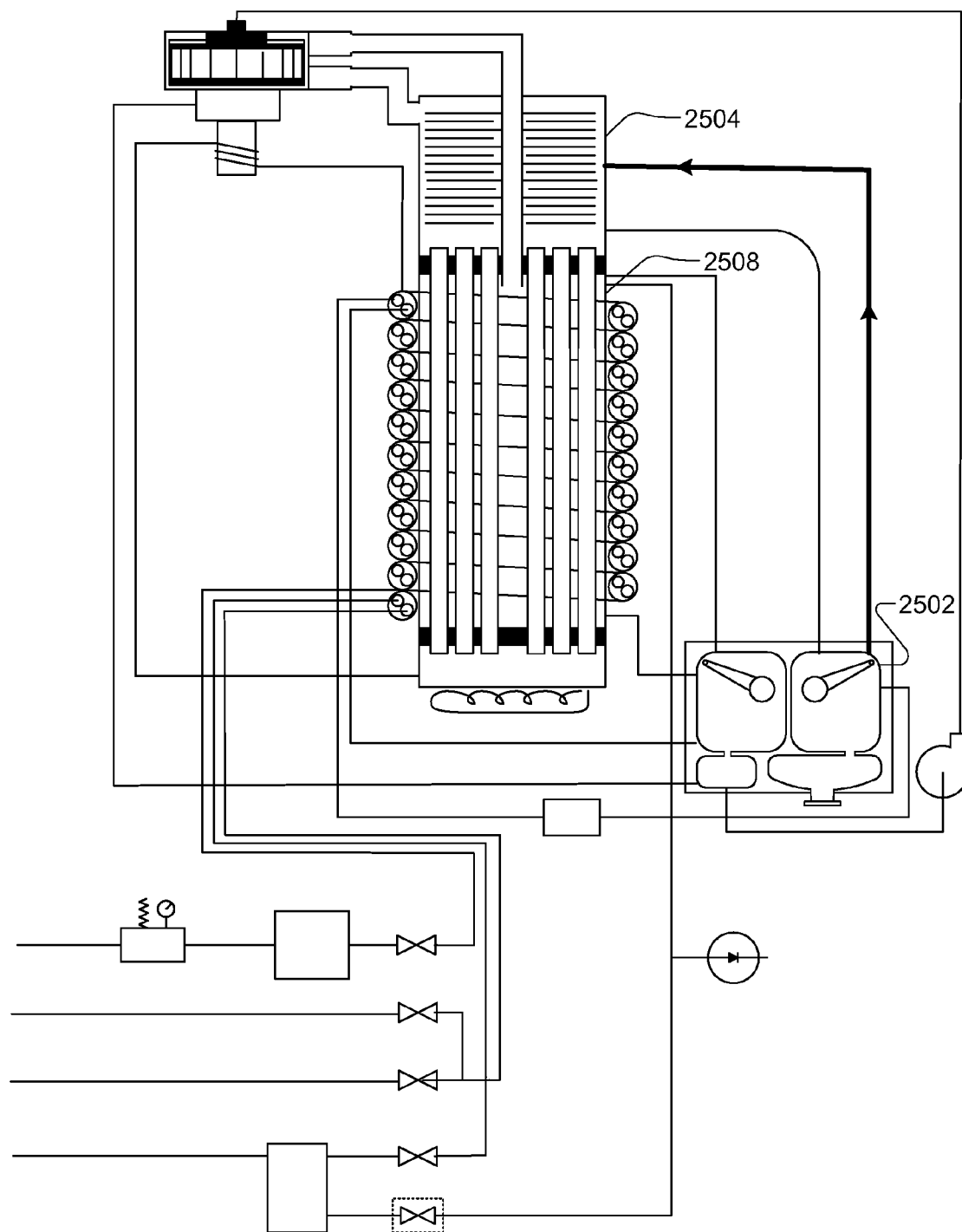


FIG. 25A

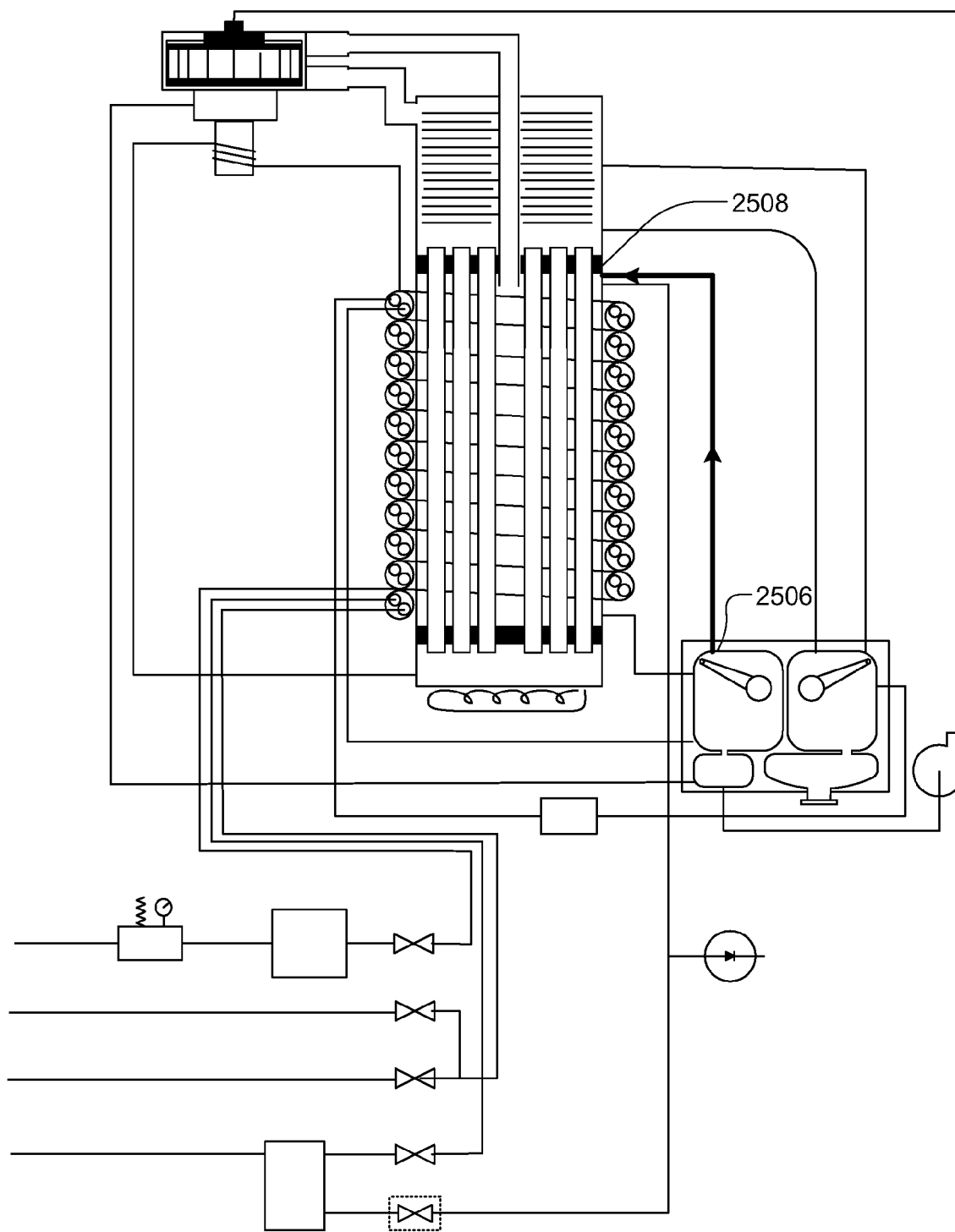


FIG. 25B

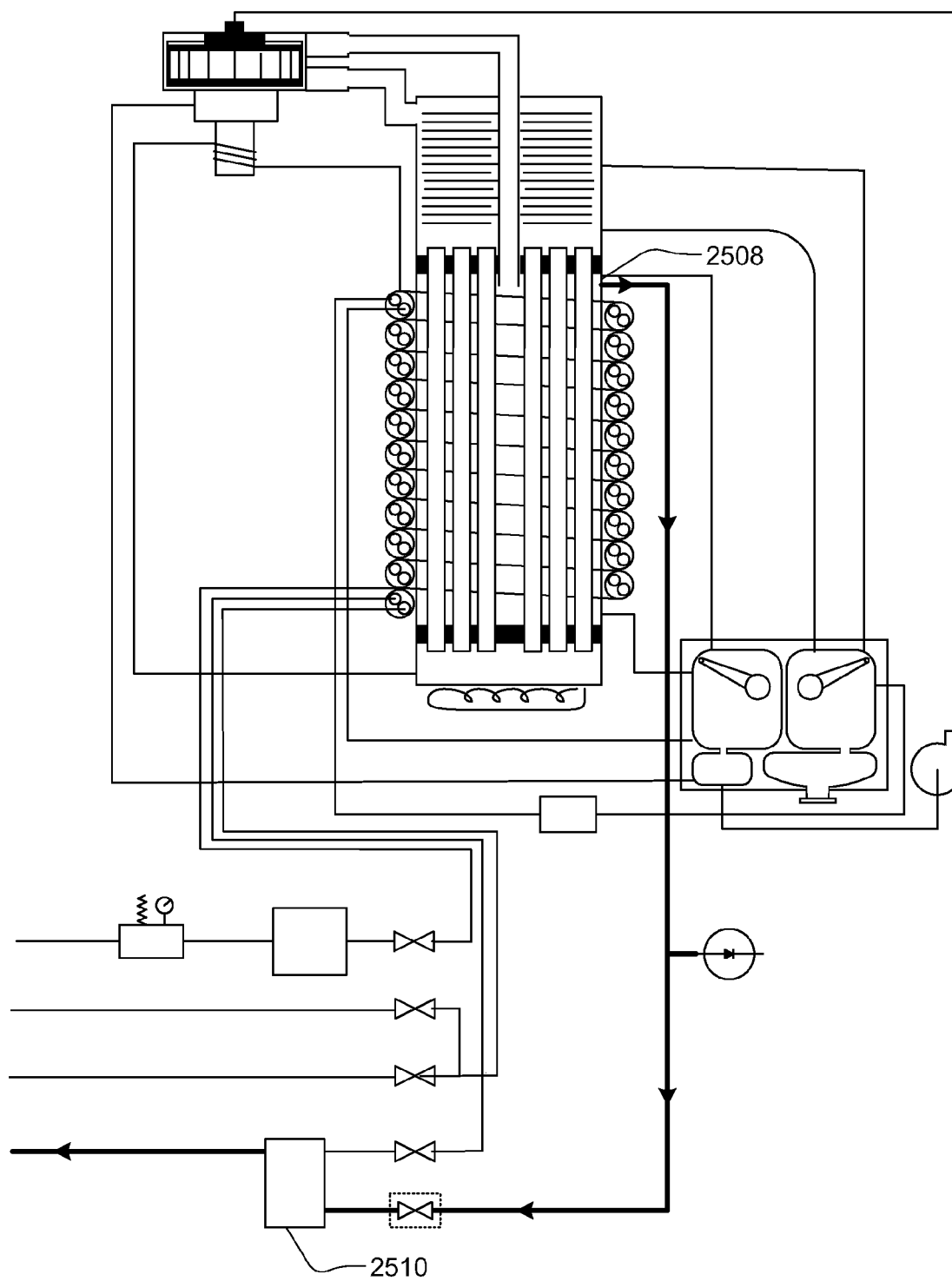


FIG. 25C

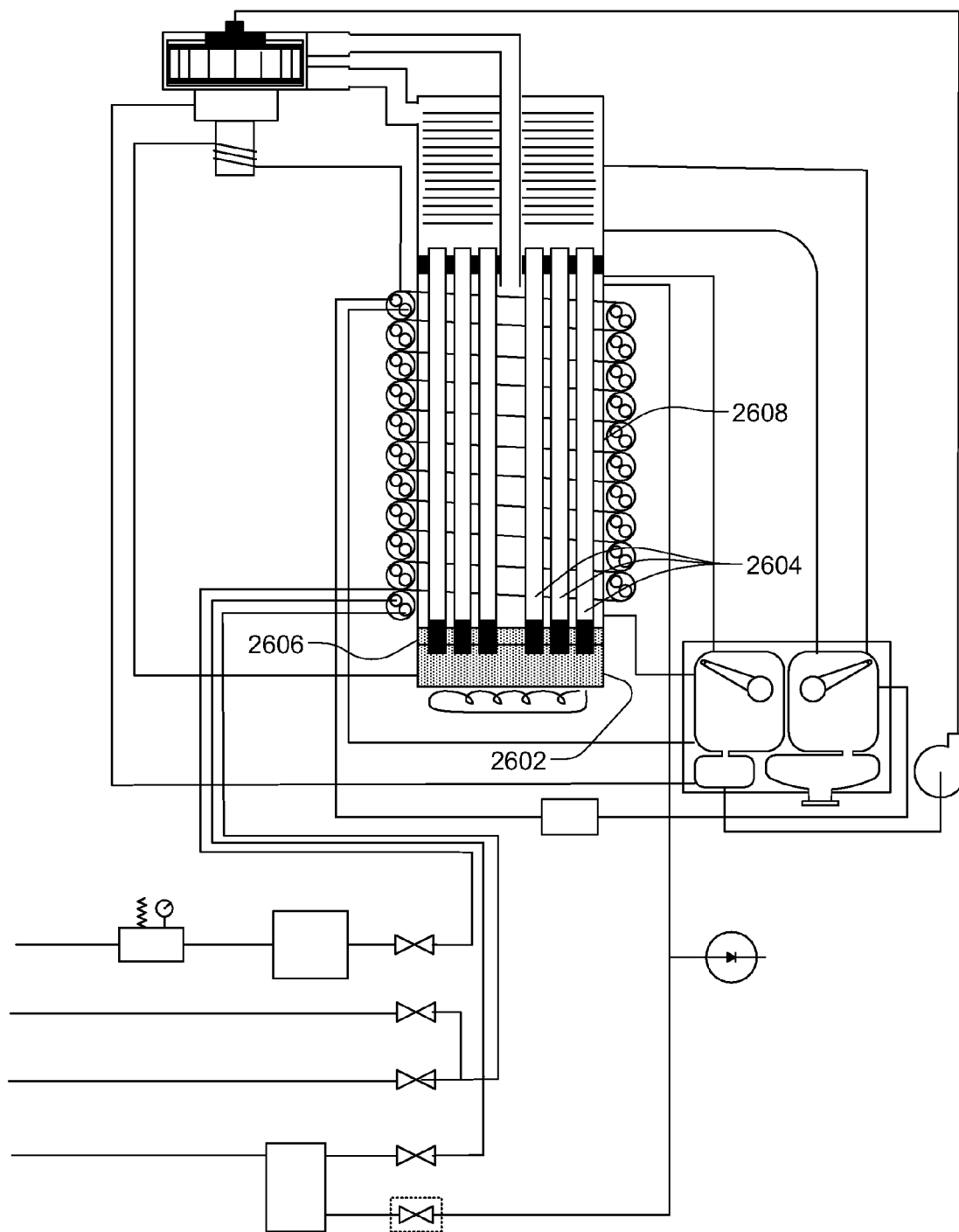


FIG. 26

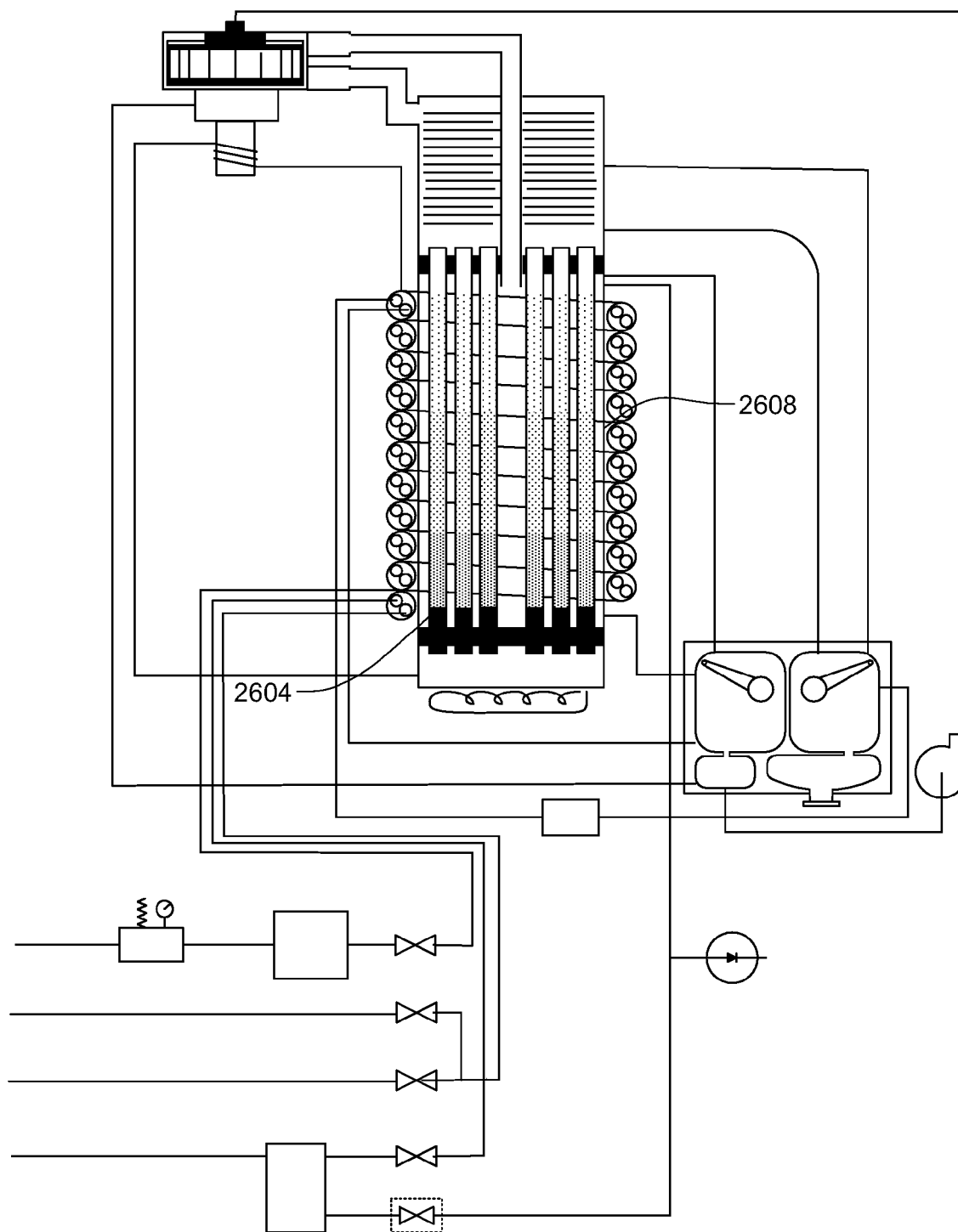


FIG. 26A

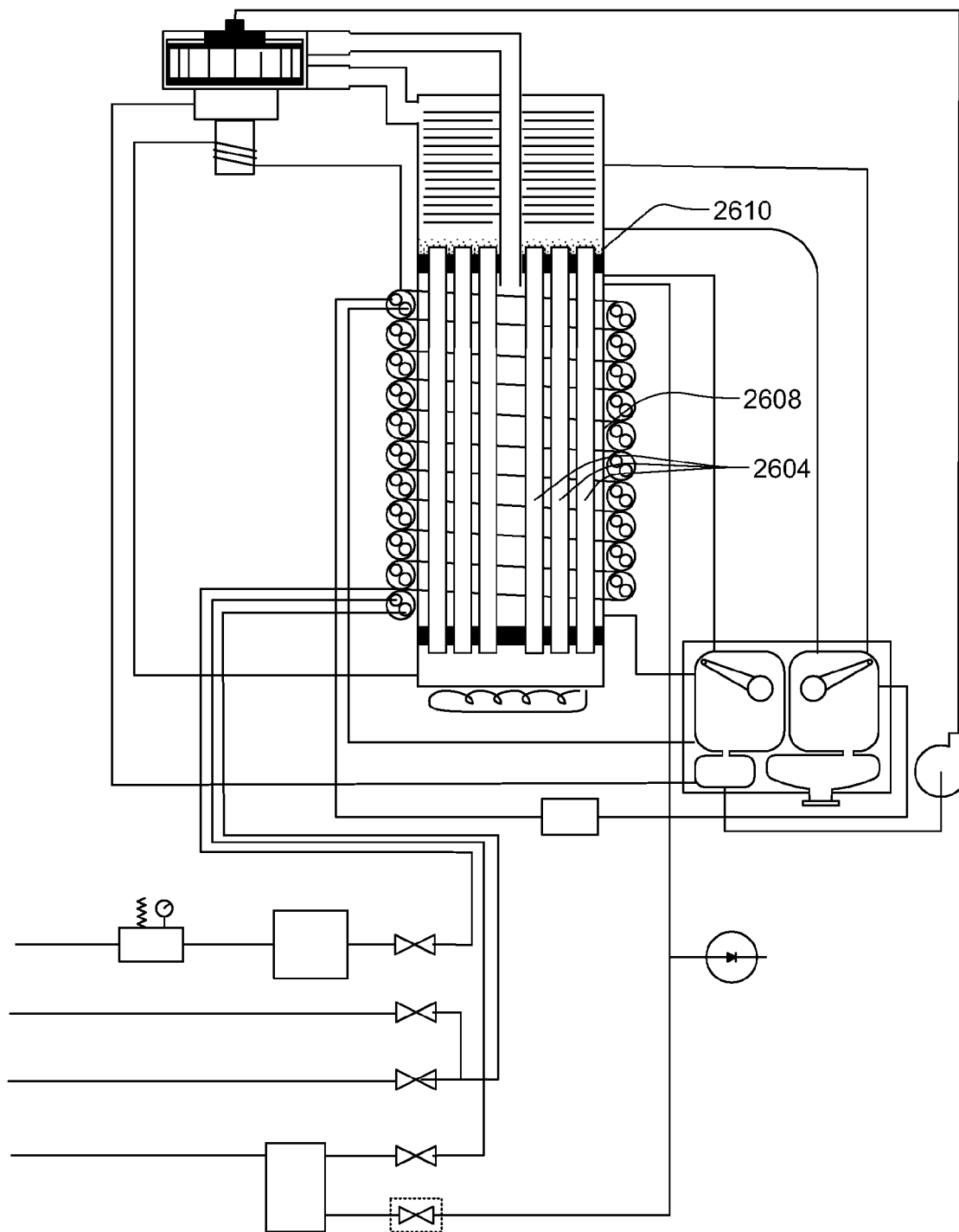


FIG. 26B

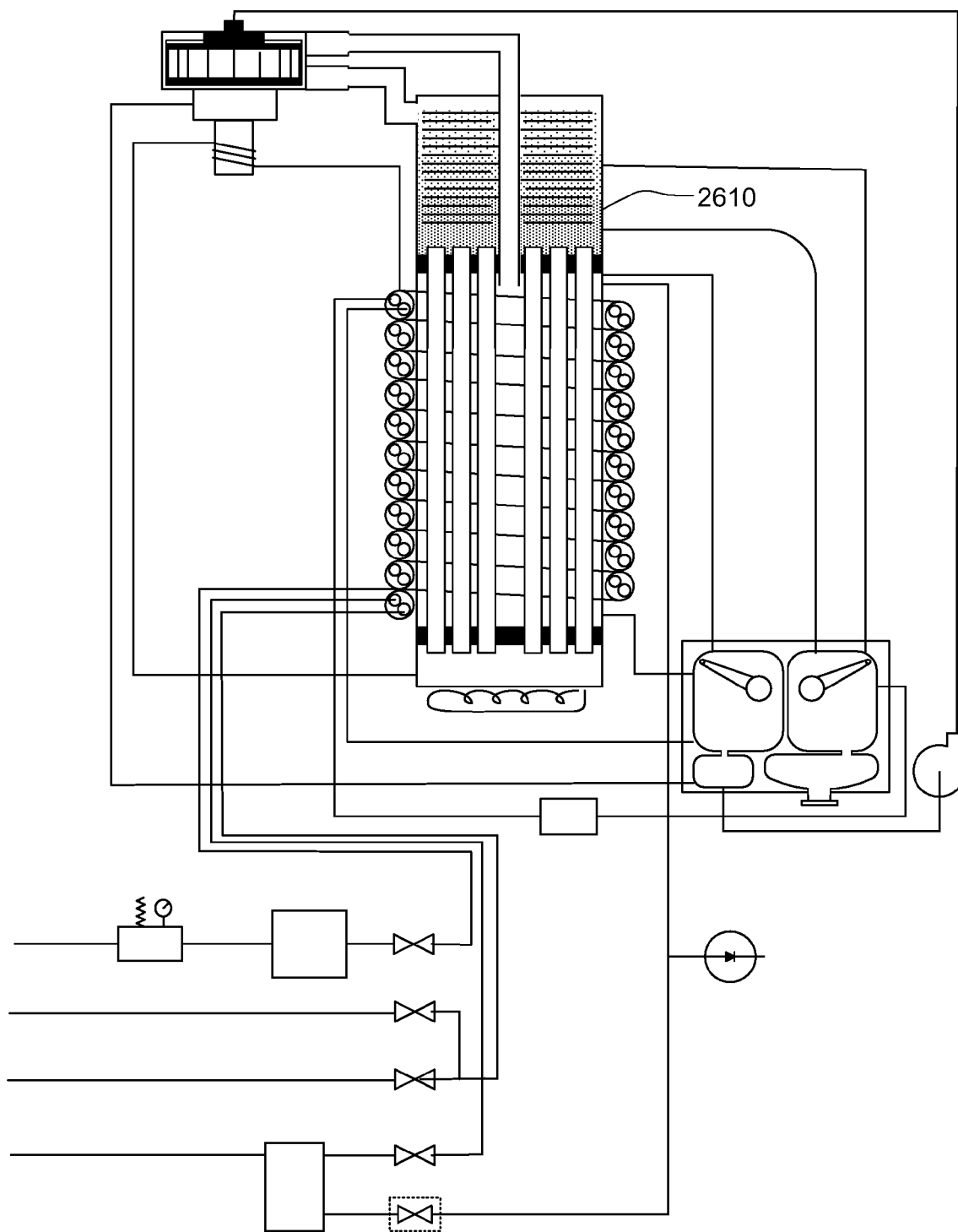


FIG. 26C

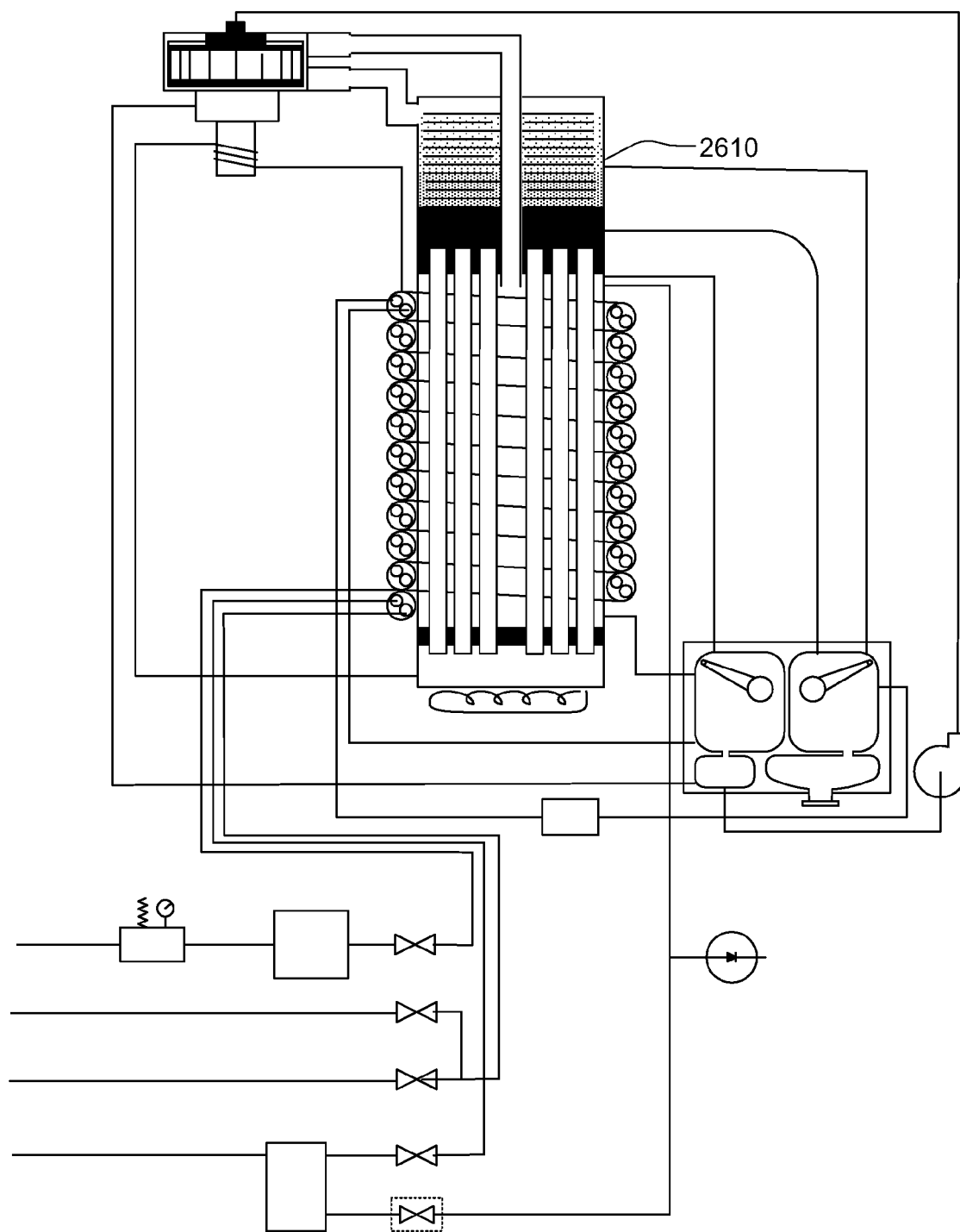


FIG. 26D

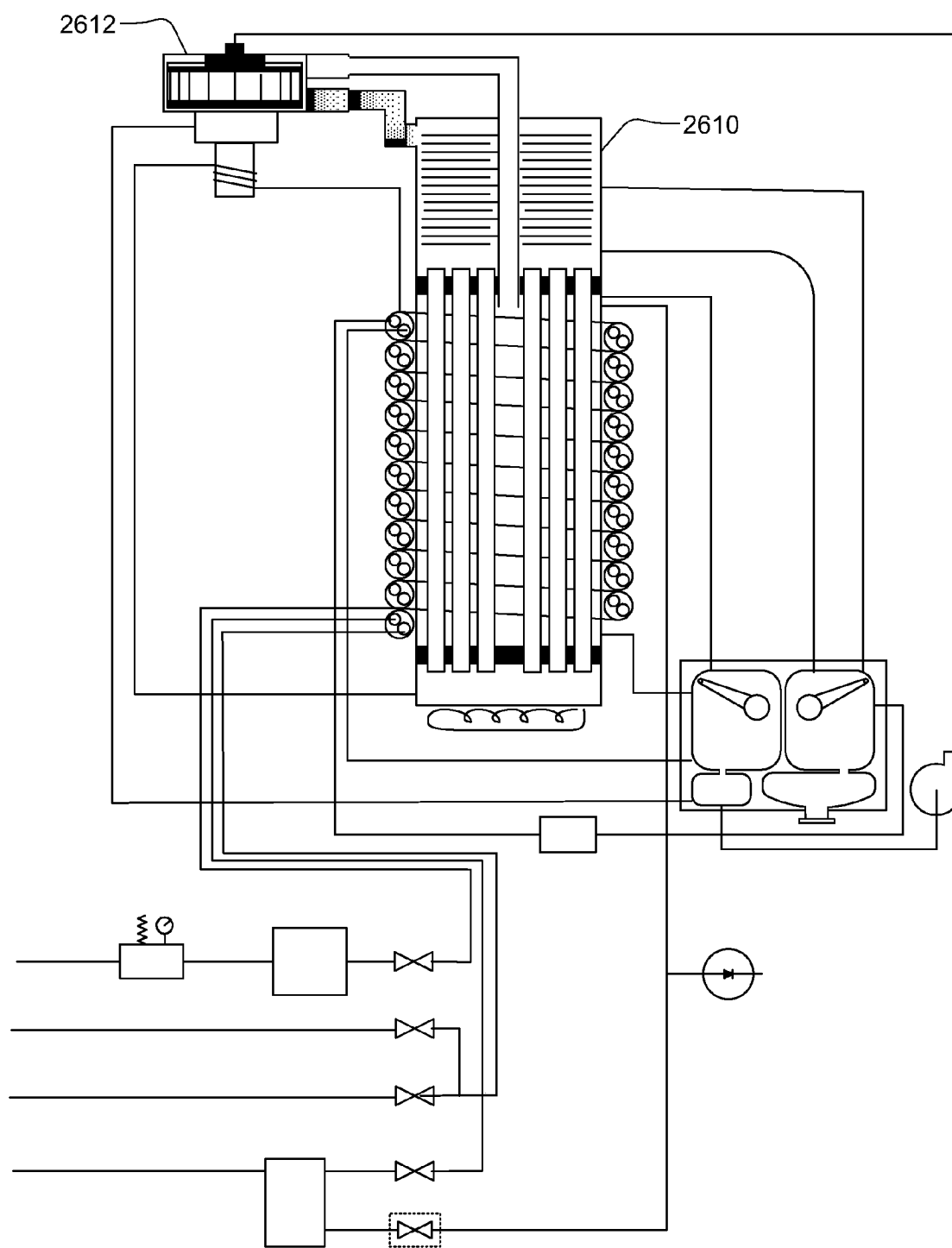


FIG. 26E

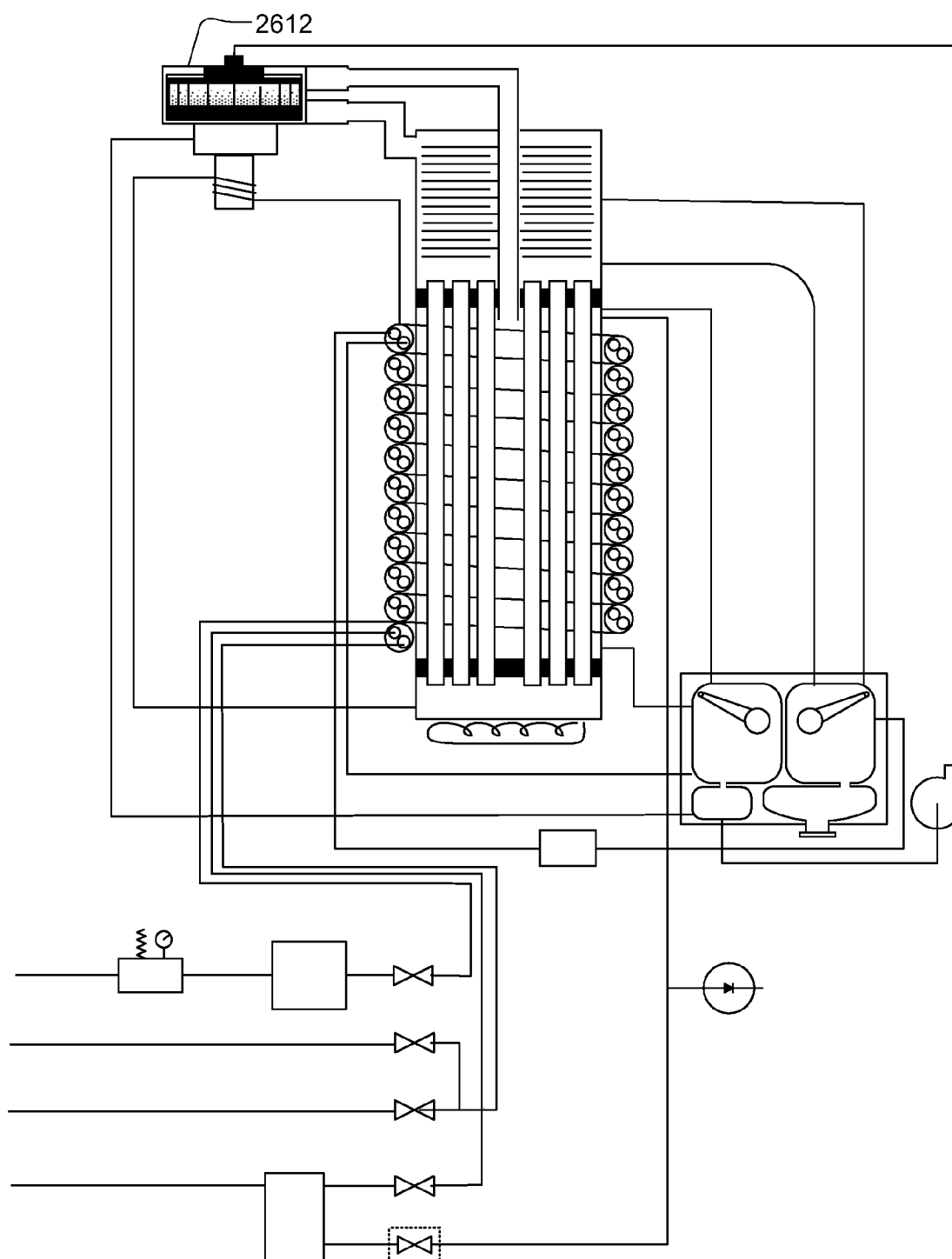


FIG. 26F

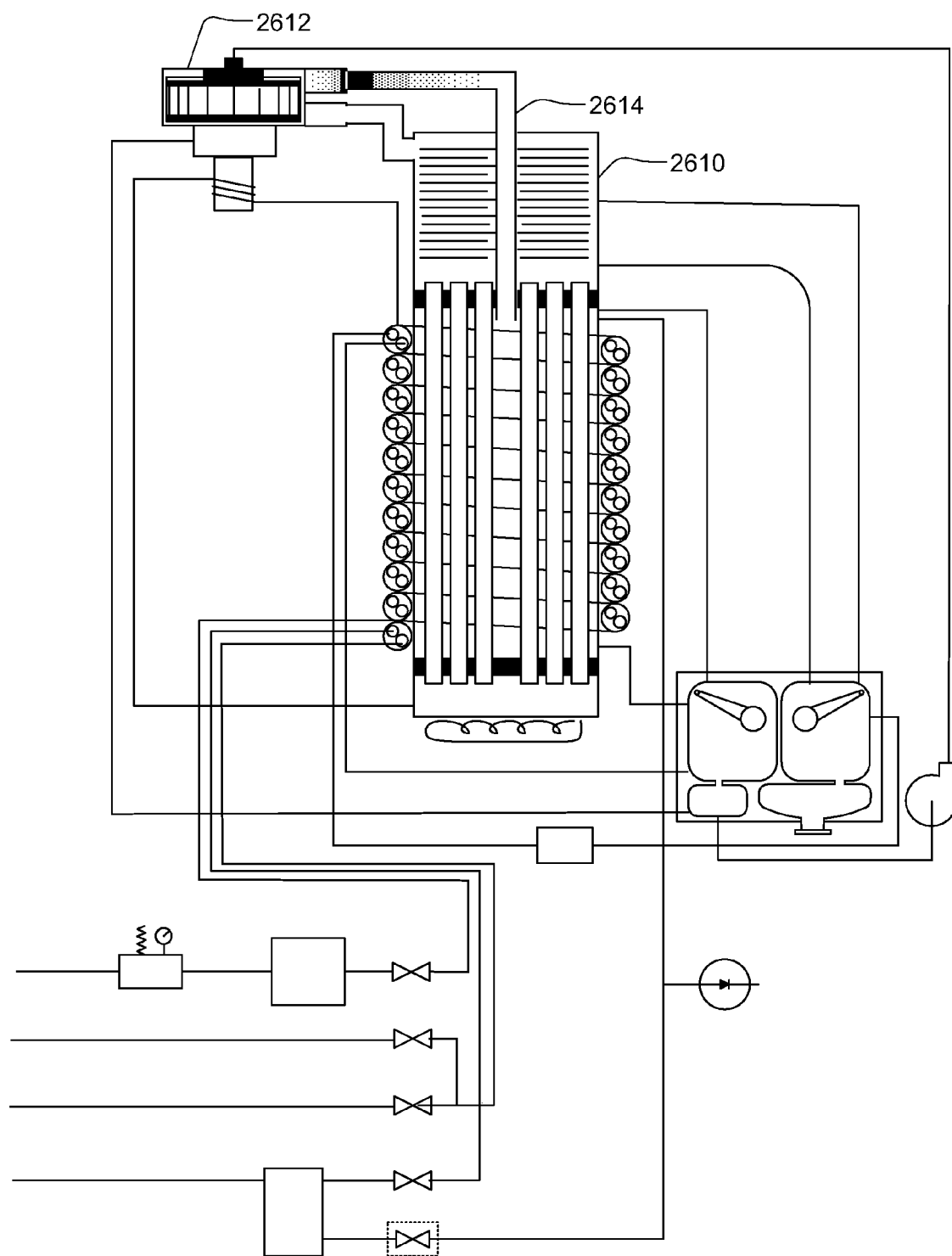


FIG. 26G

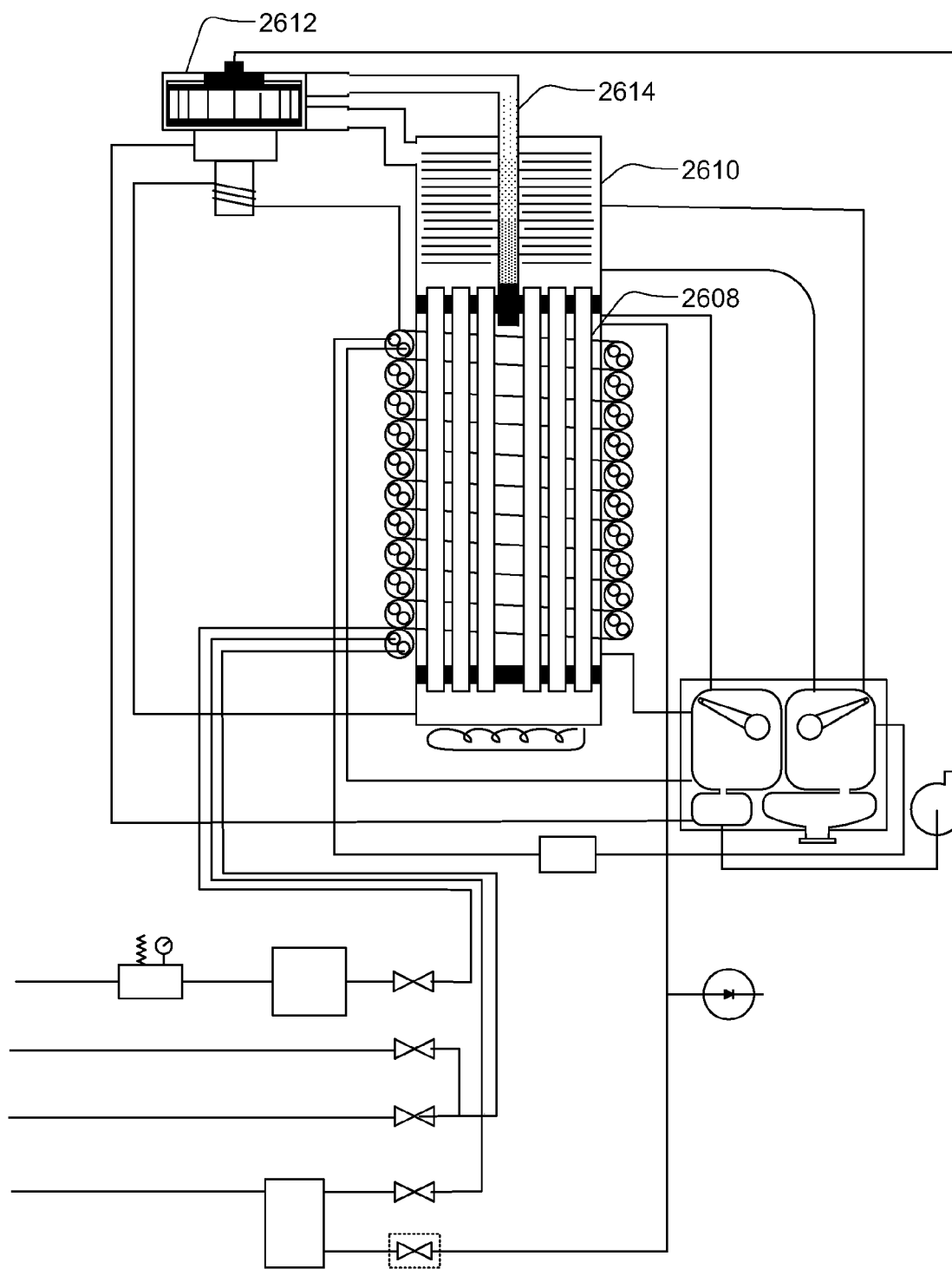


FIG. 26H

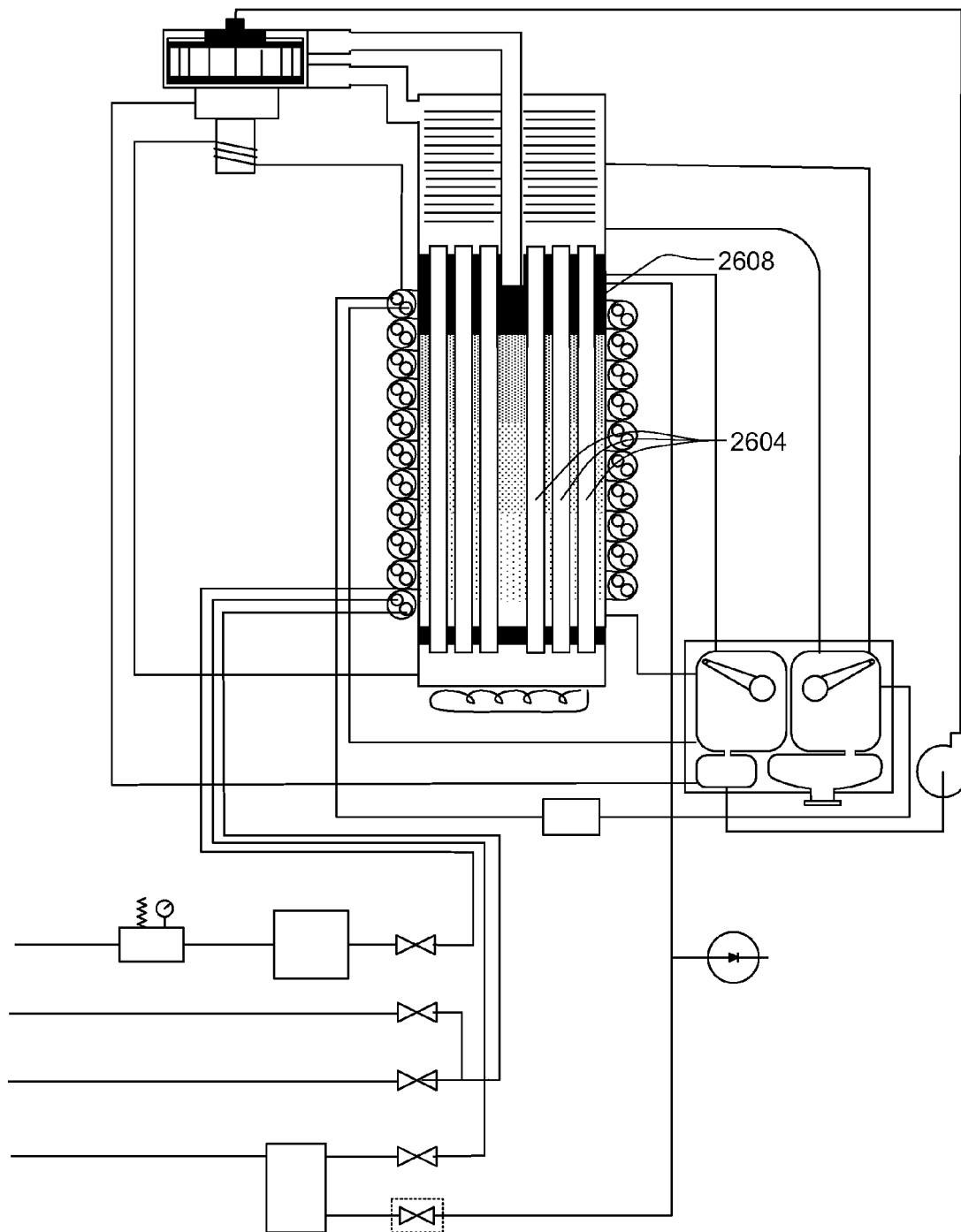


FIG. 26I

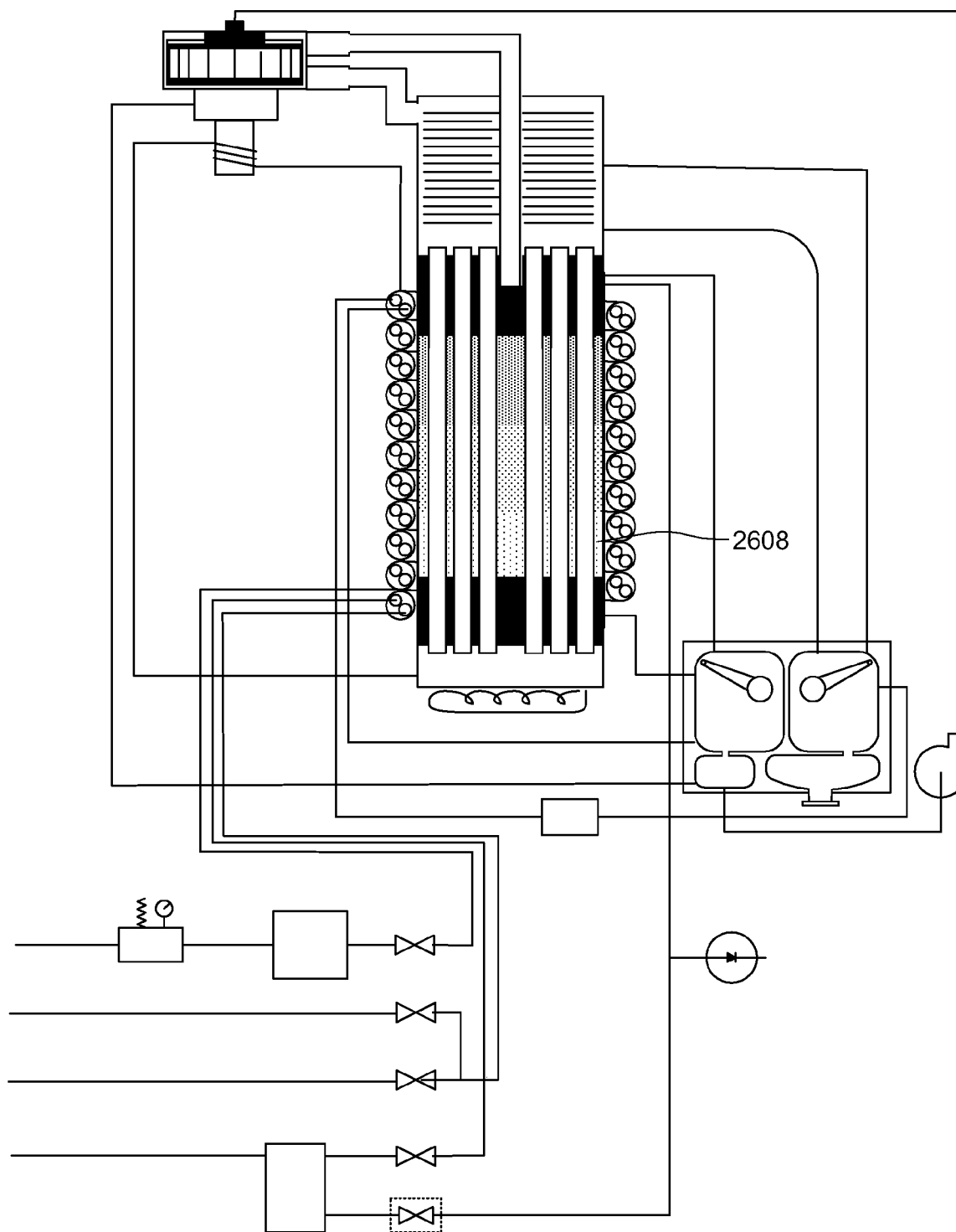


FIG. 26J

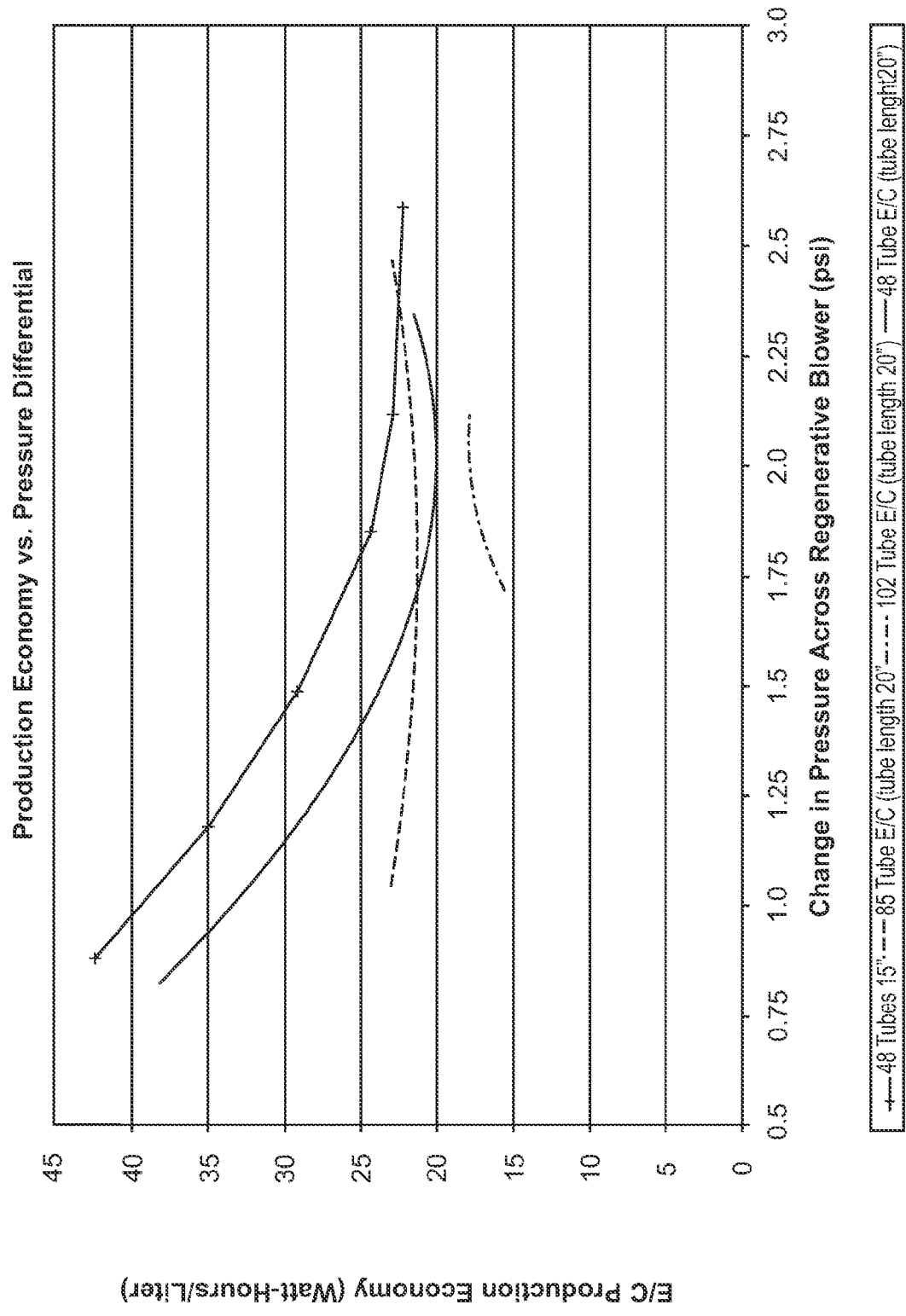


FIG. 27

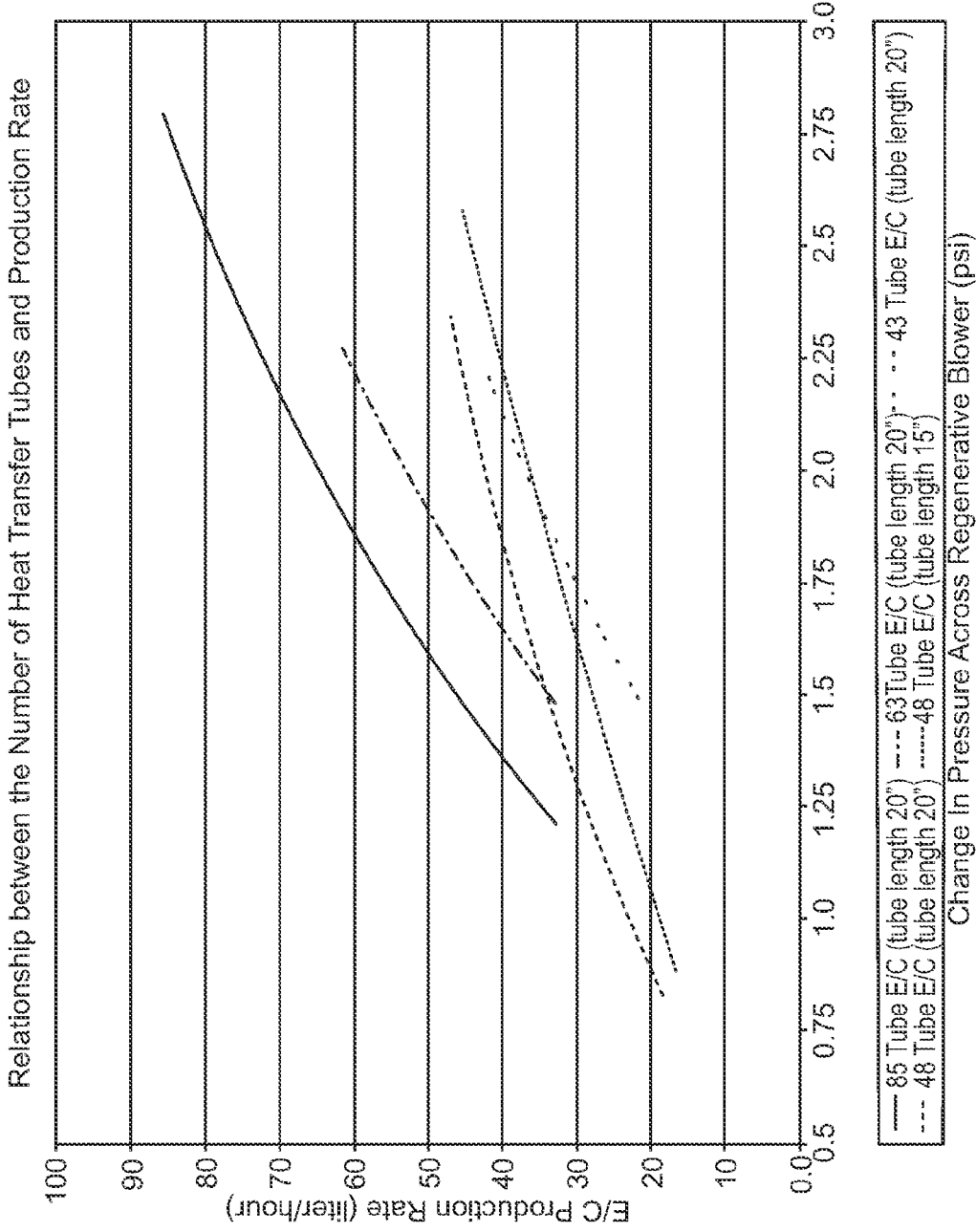


FIG. 28

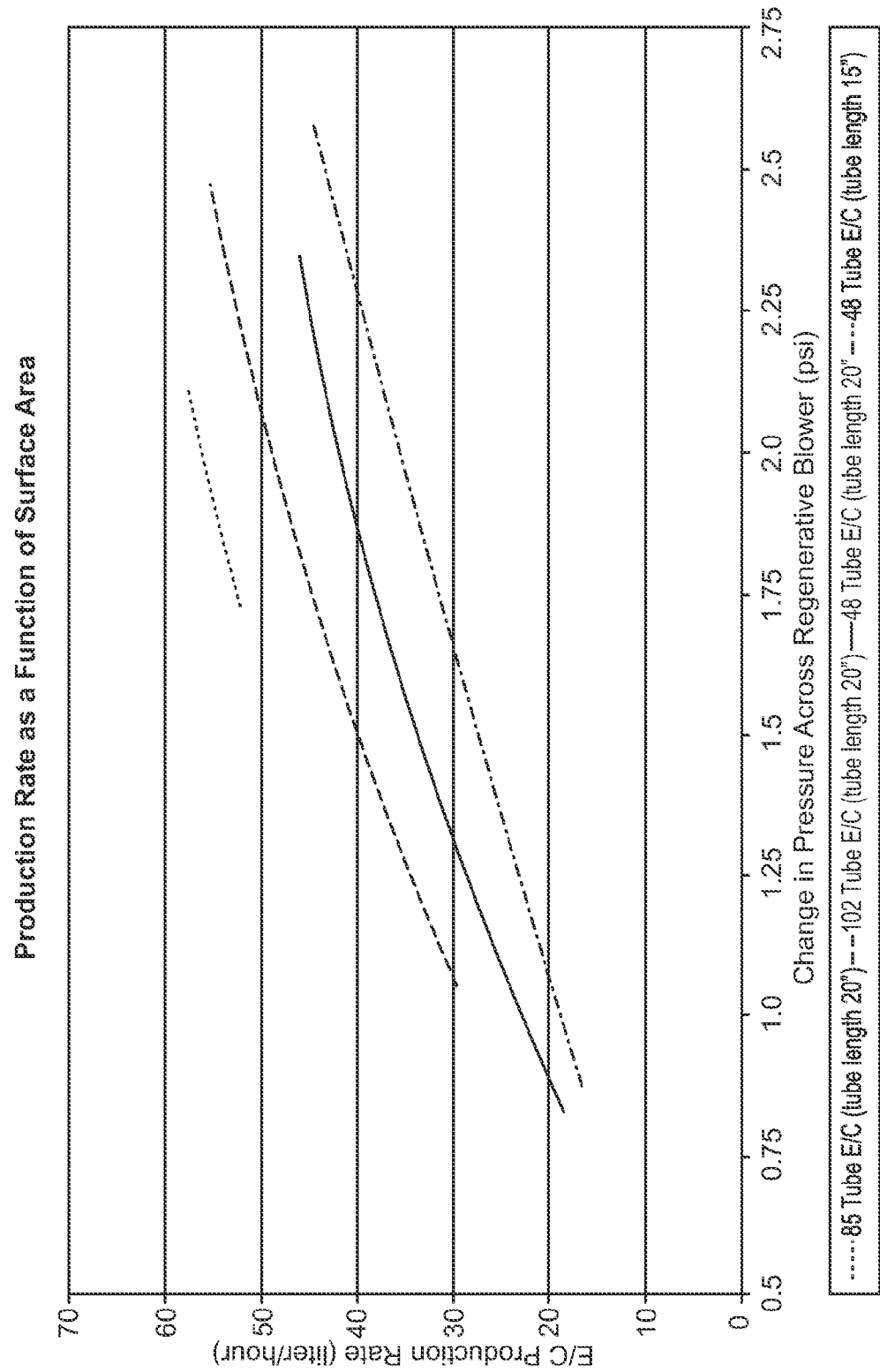


FIG. 29

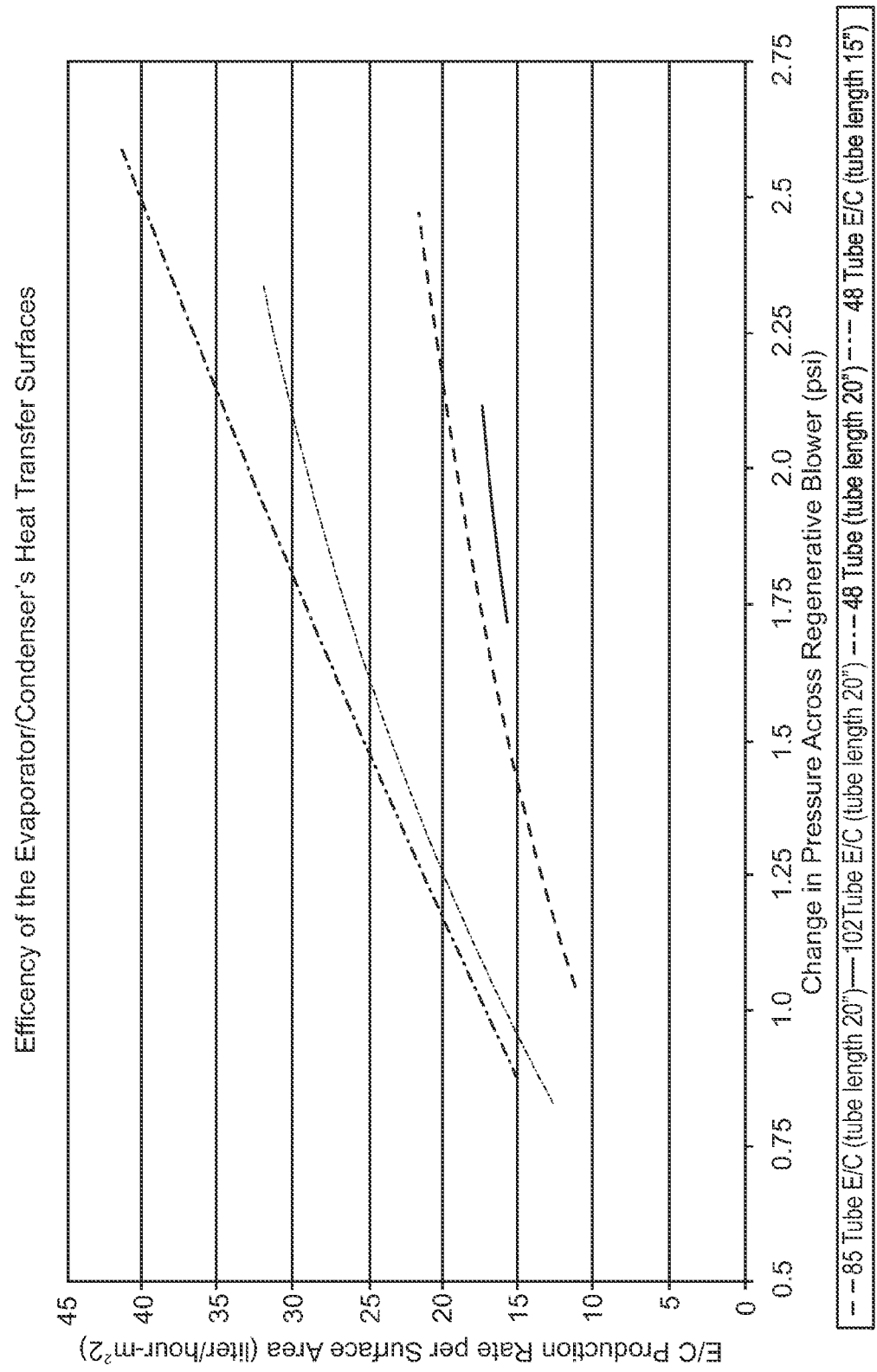


FIG. 30

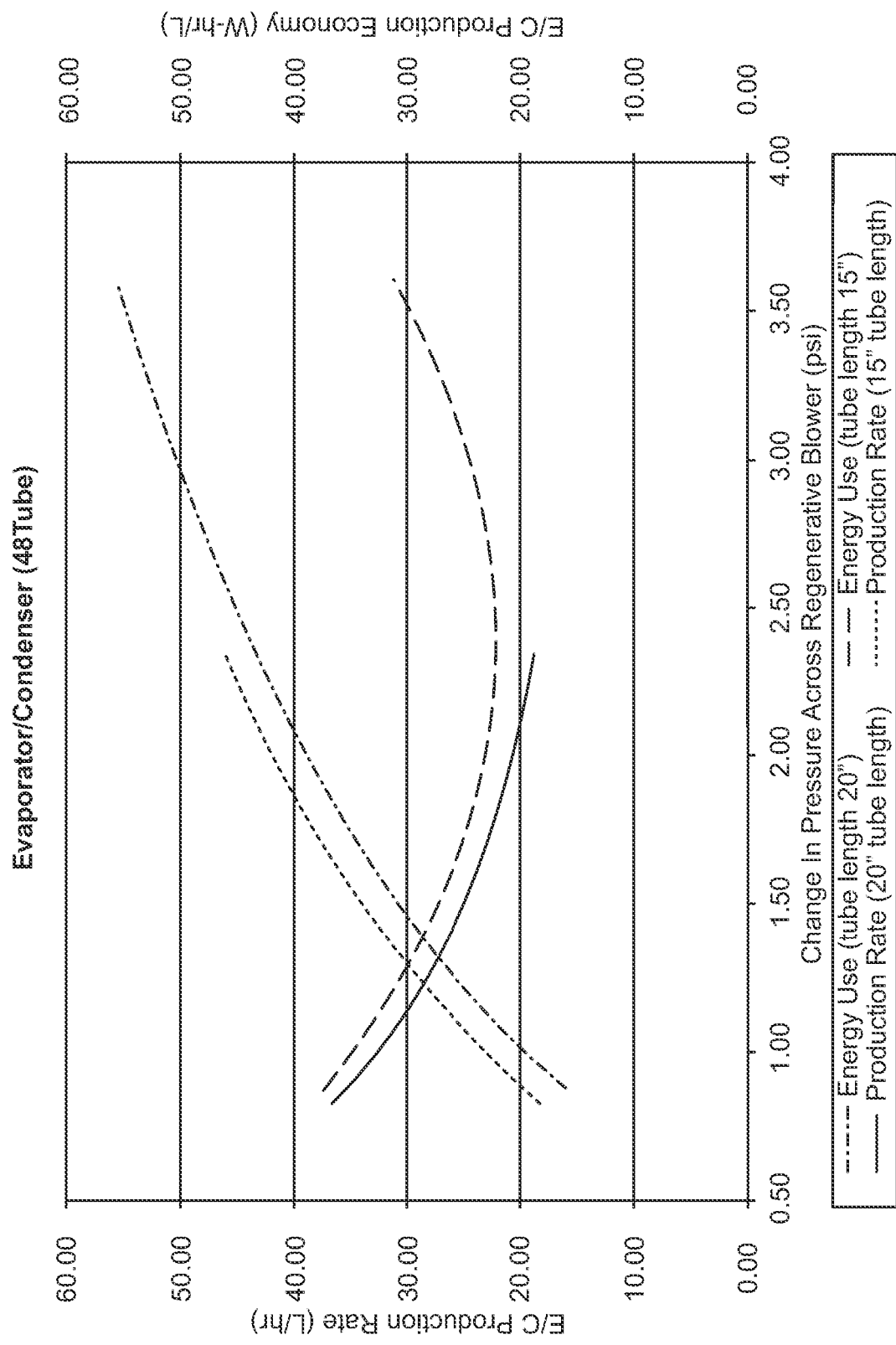
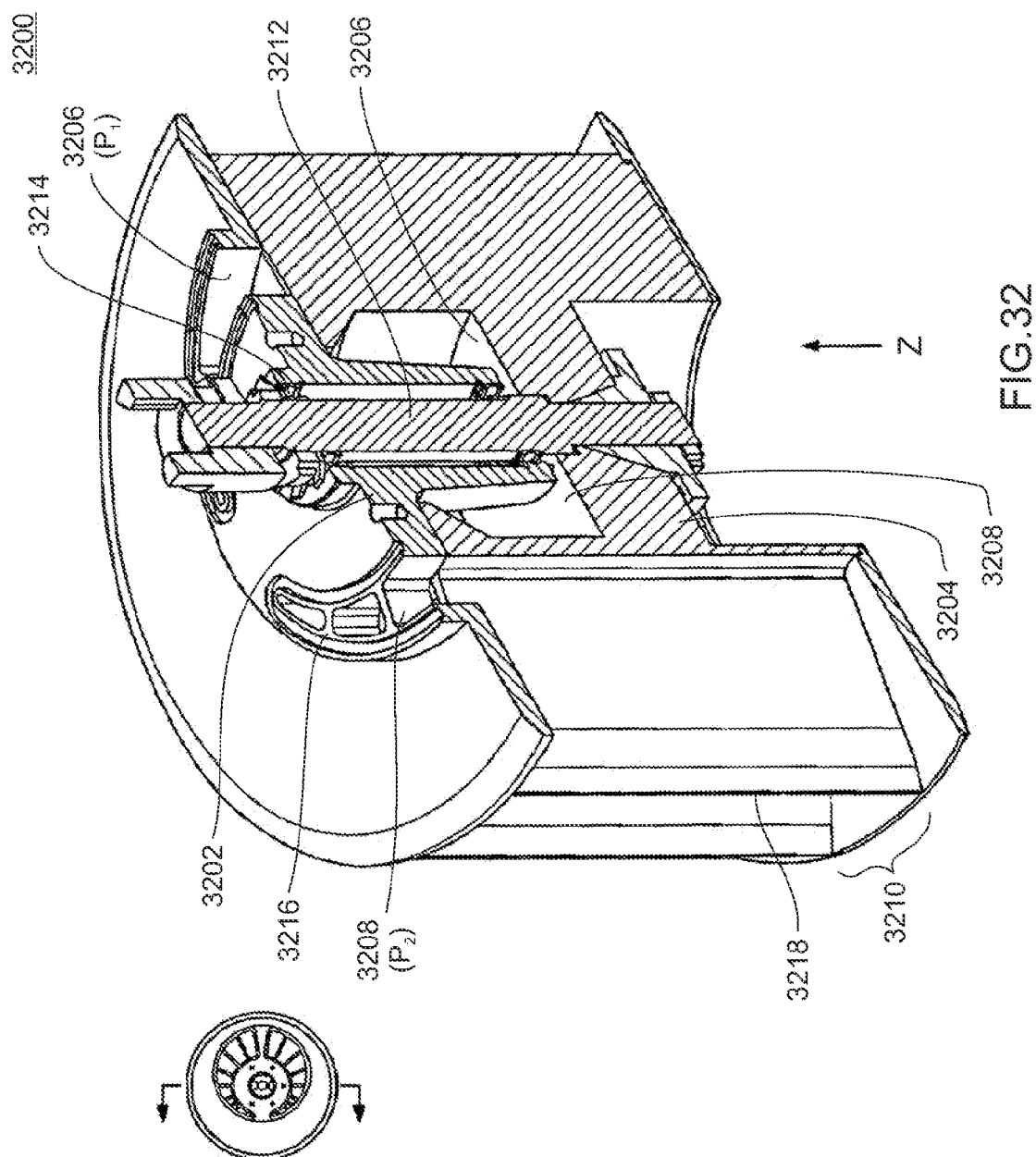


FIG. 31



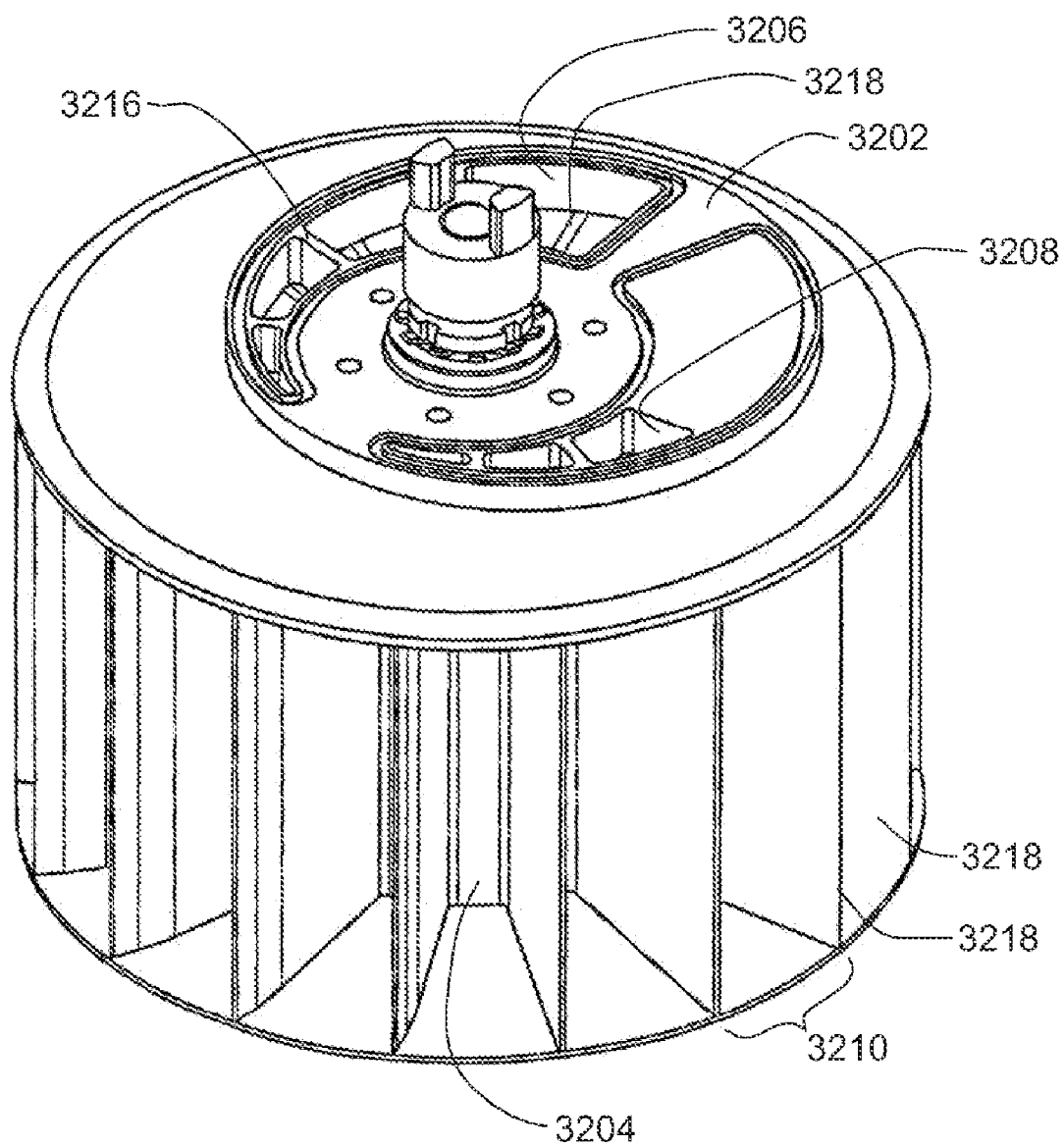


FIG. 32A

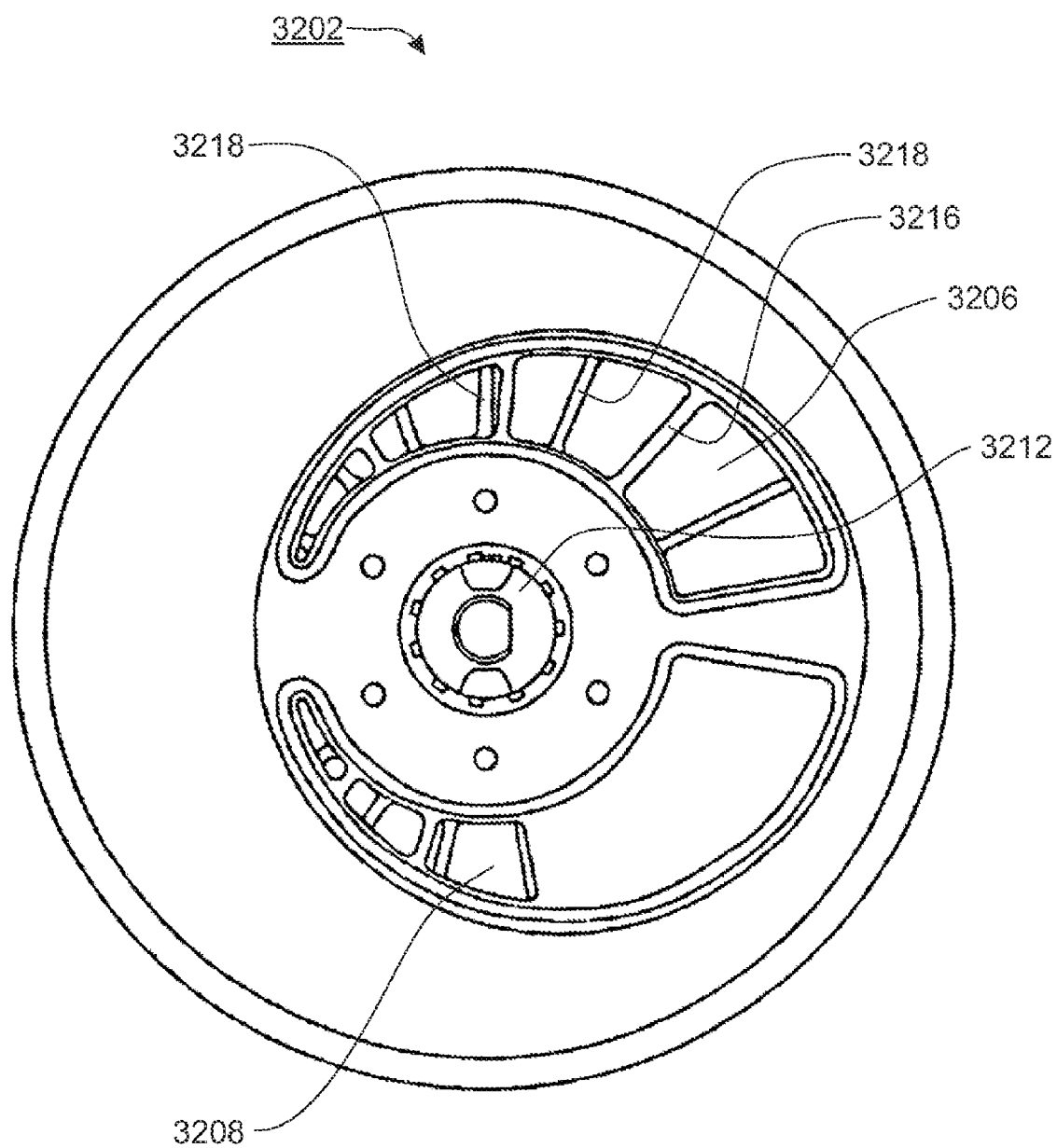
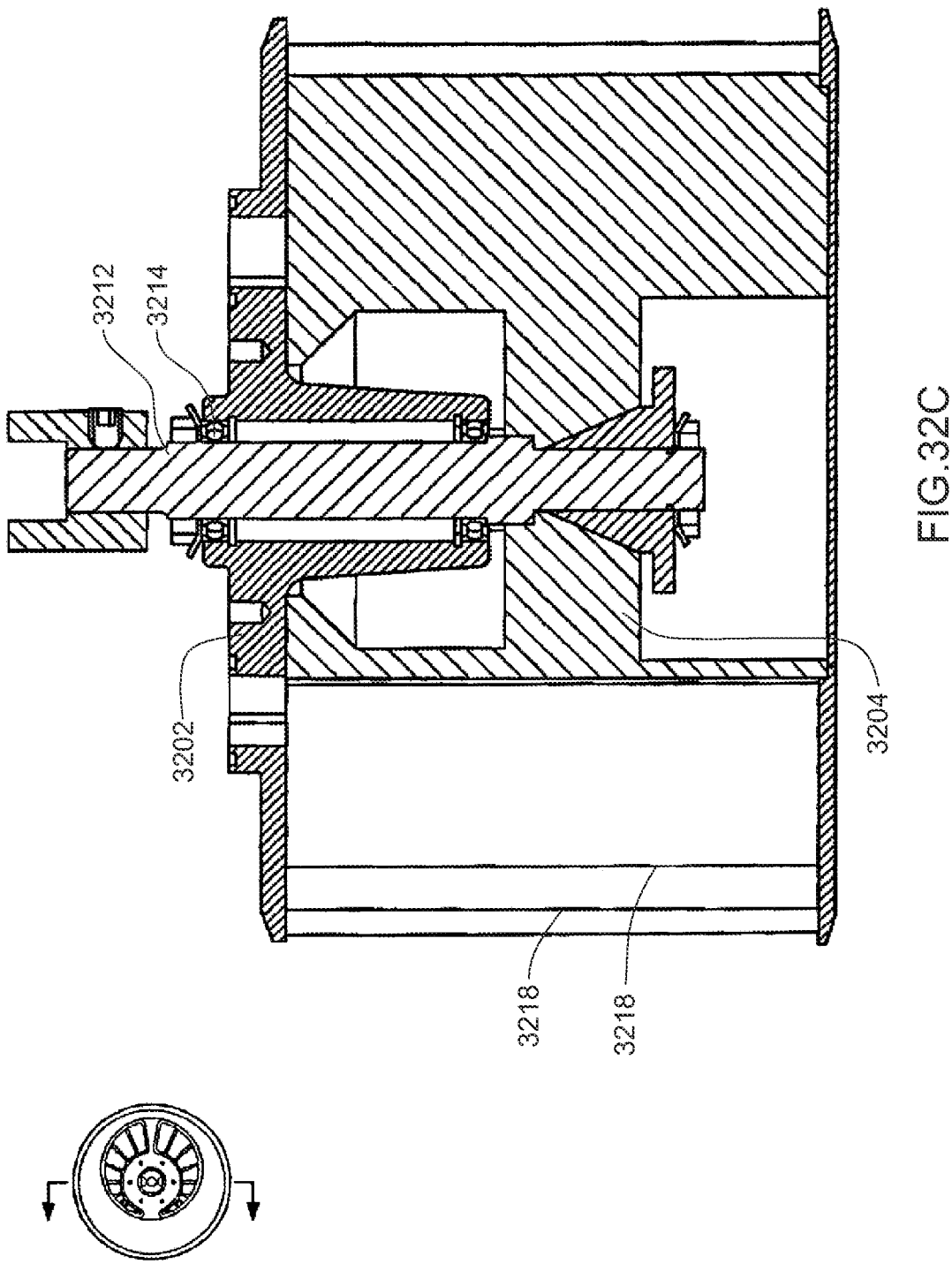


FIG. 32B



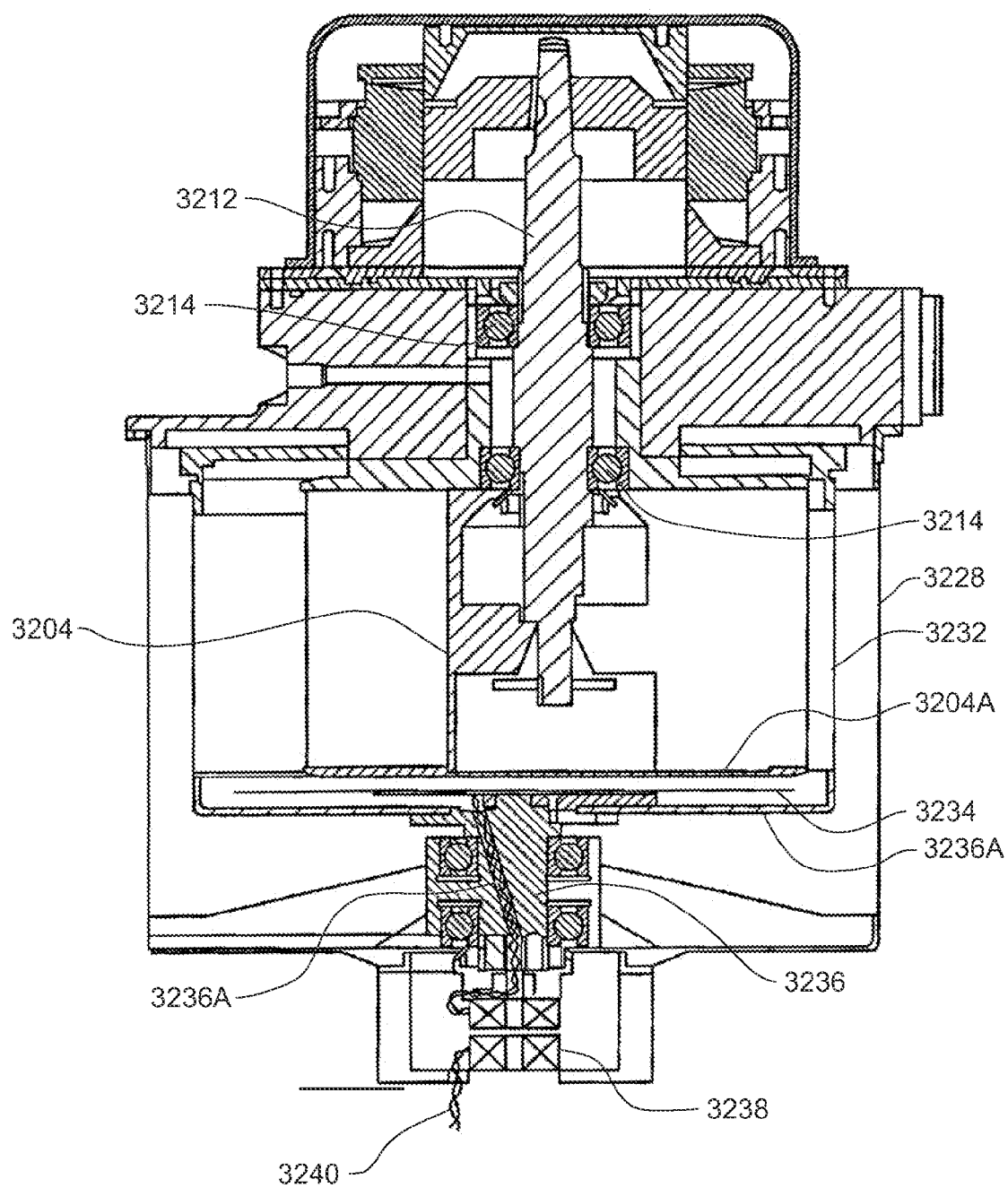


FIG.32D

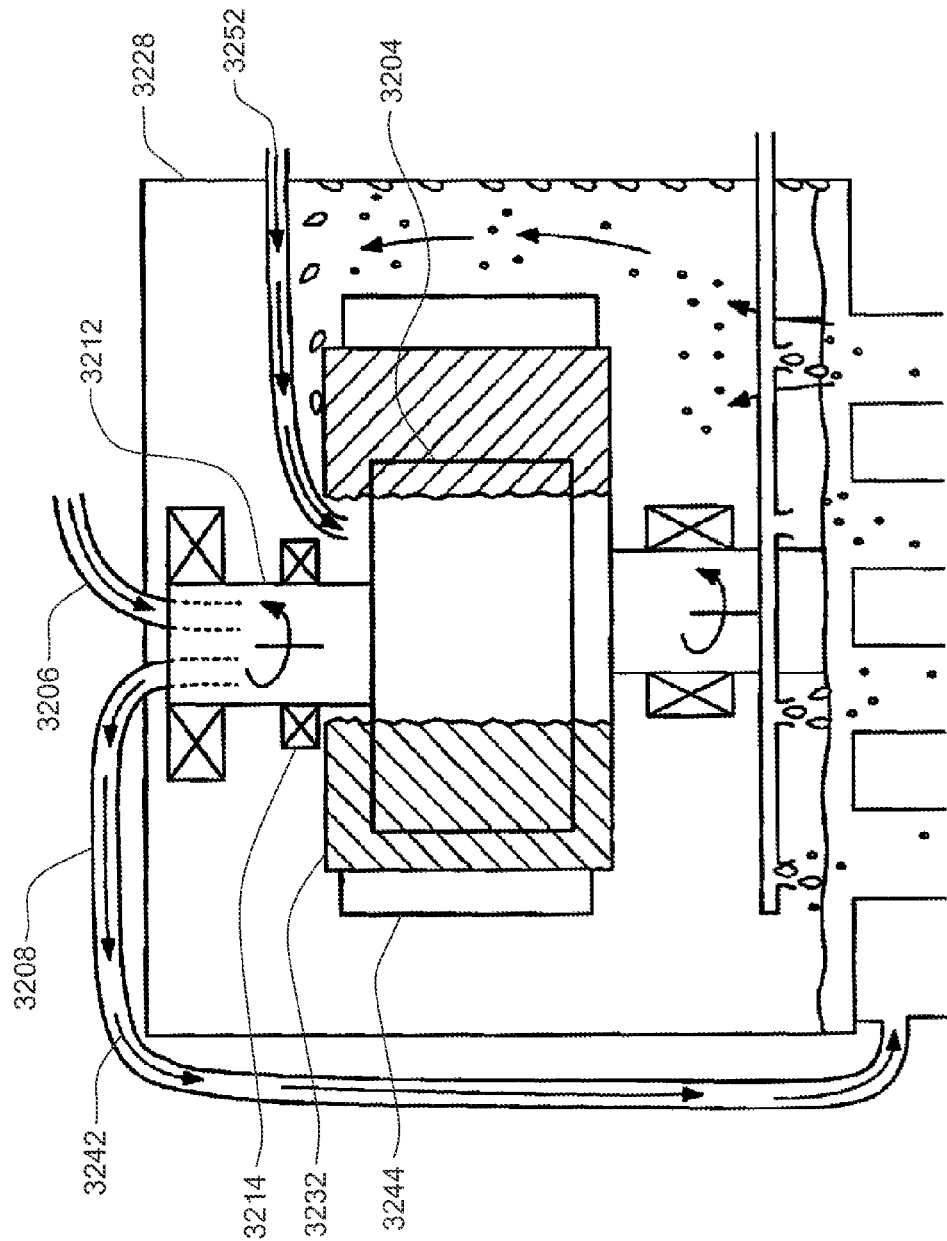
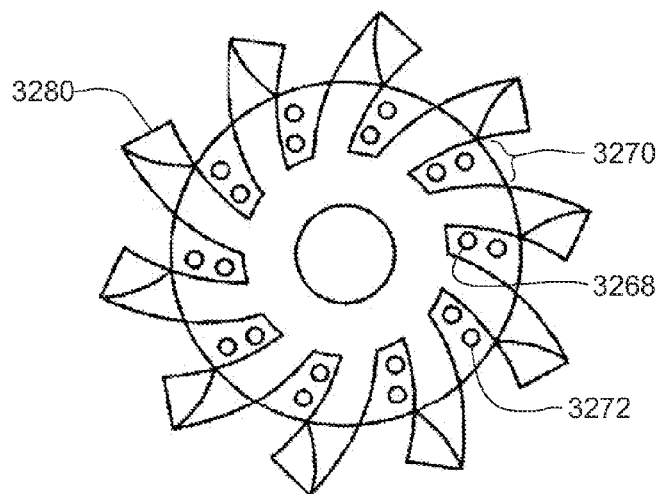
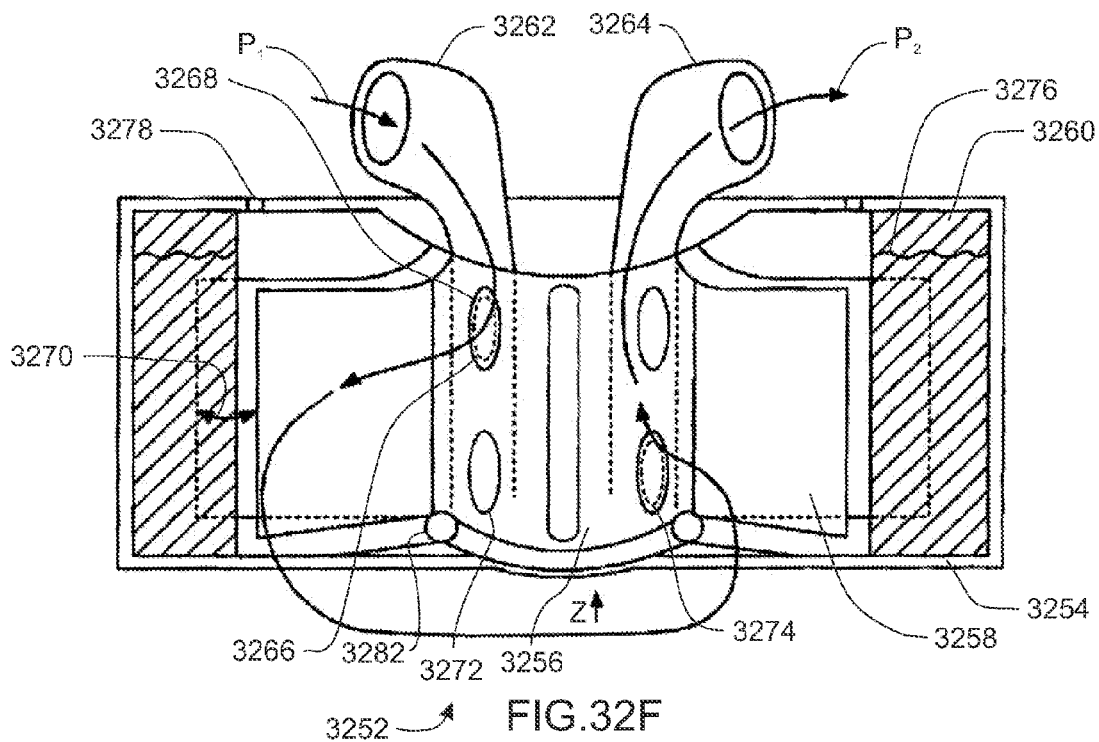


FIG.32E



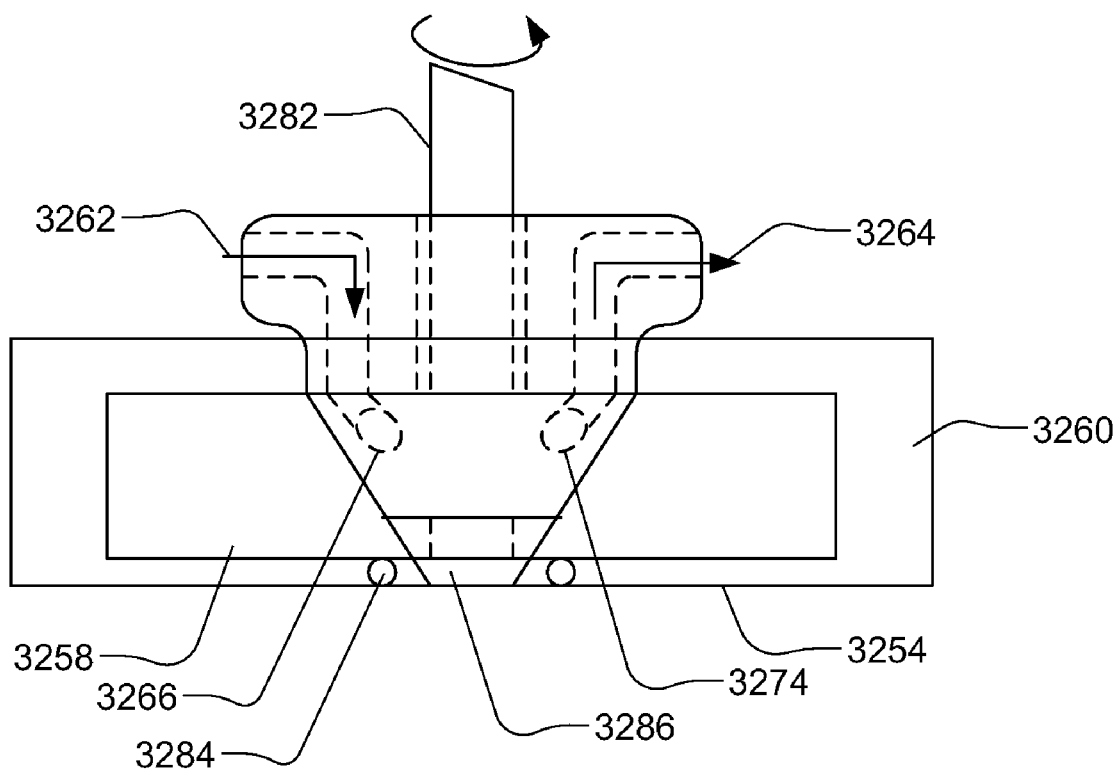


FIG. 32H

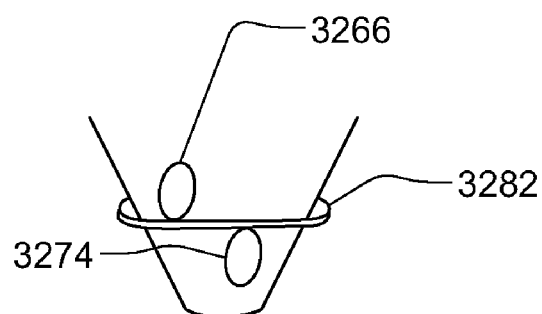


FIG. 32I

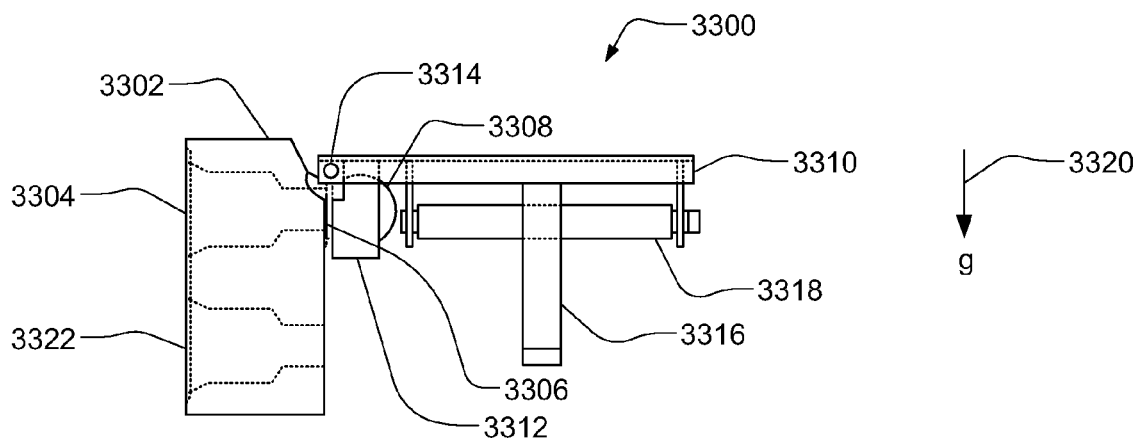


FIG. 33

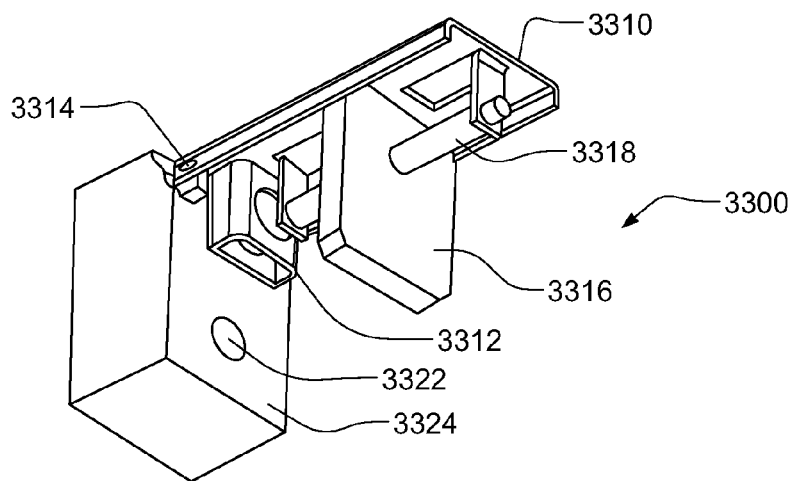


FIG. 33A

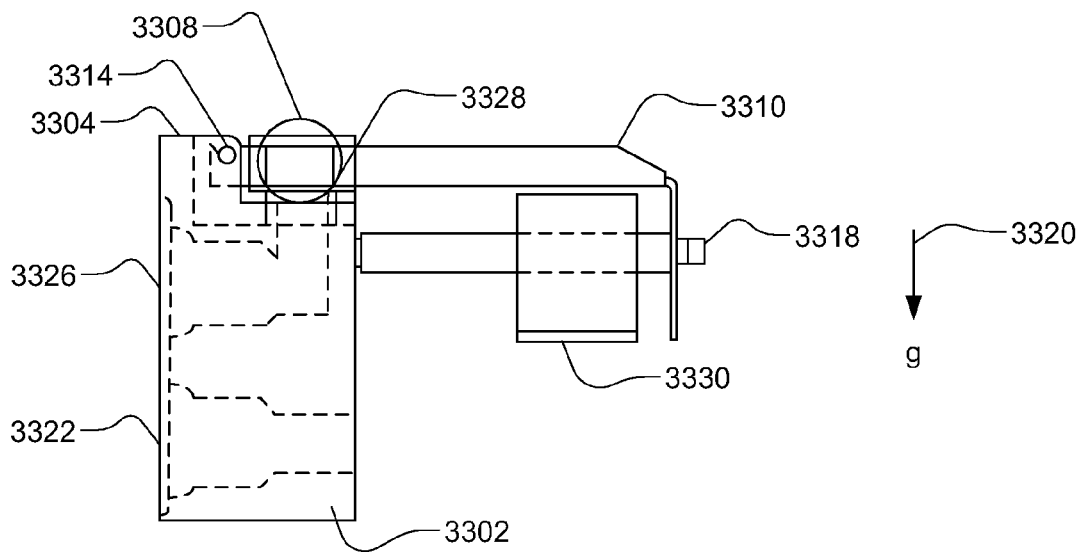


FIG. 33B

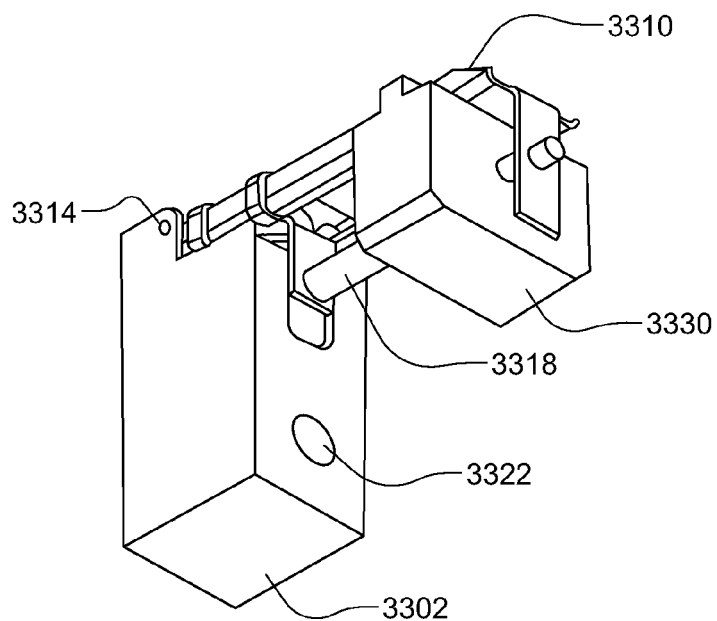


FIG. 33C

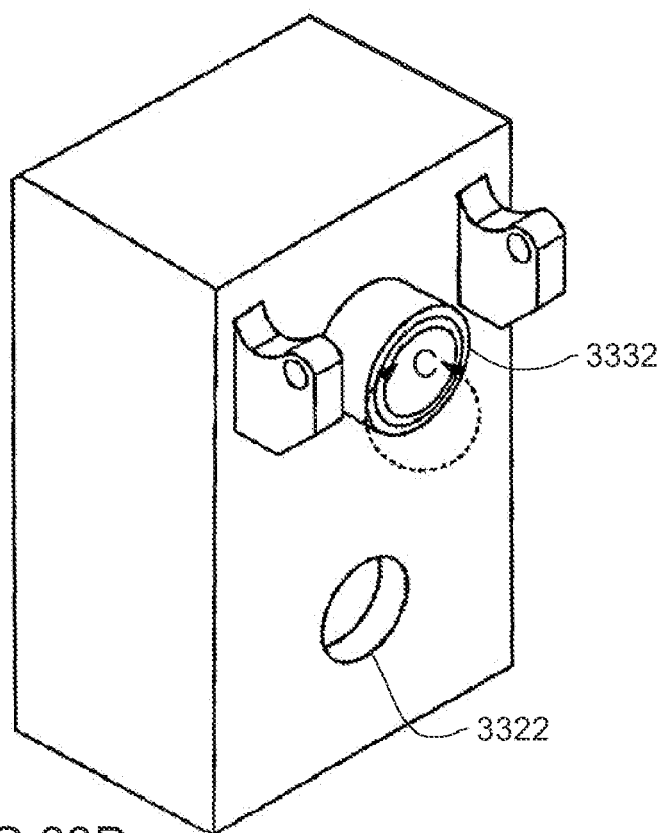


FIG. 33D

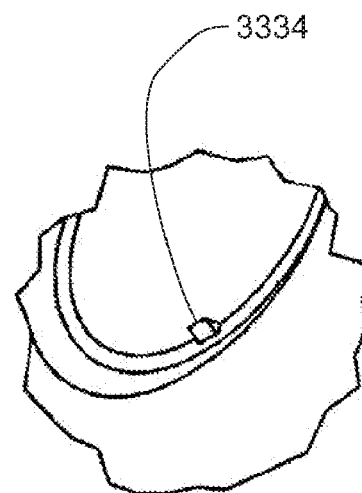


FIG. 33E

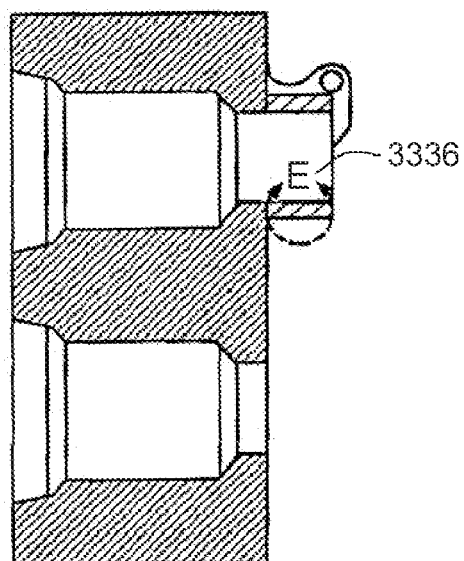


FIG. 33F



FIG. 33G

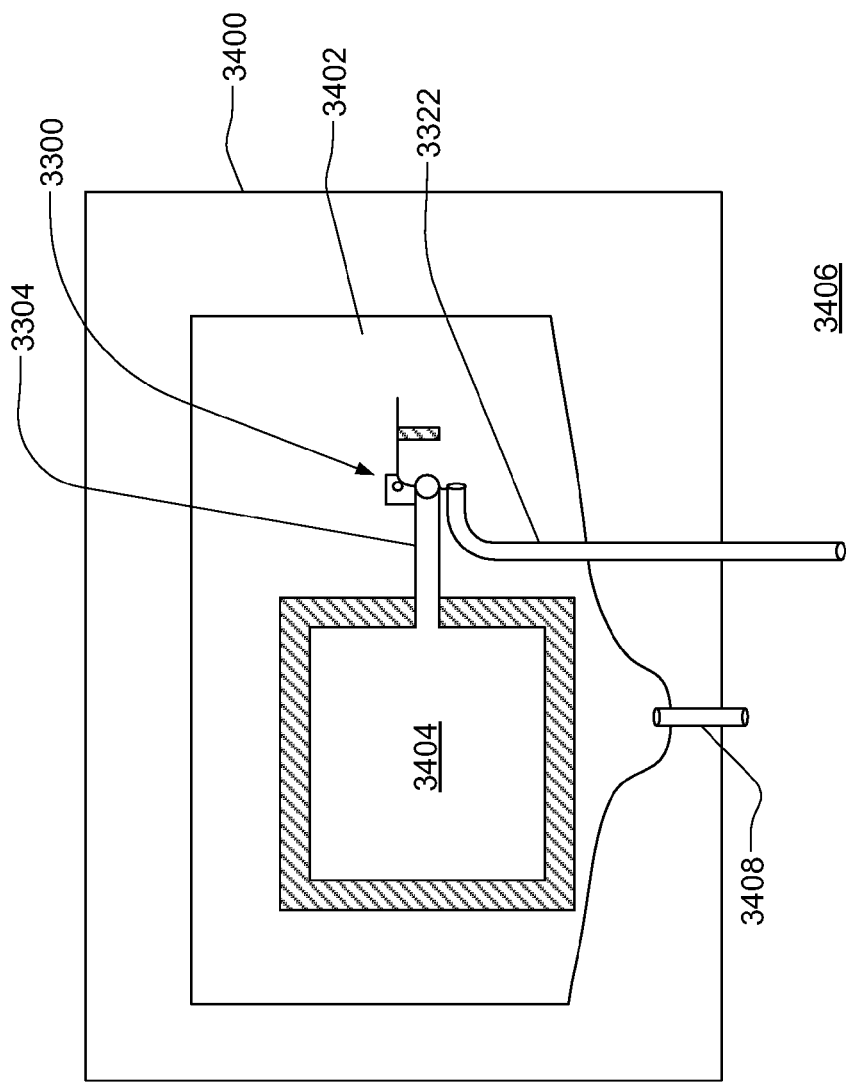


FIG. 34

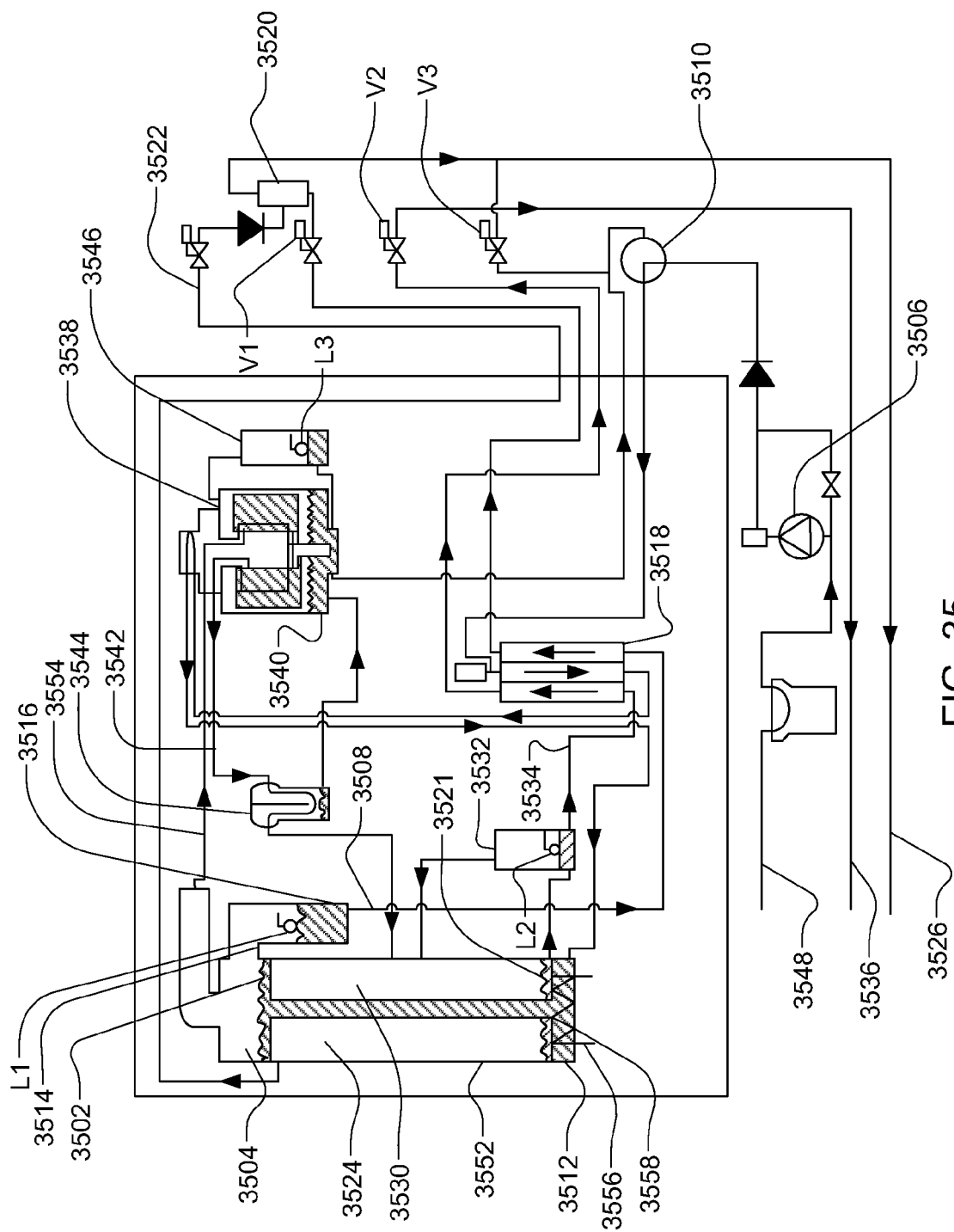


FIG. 35

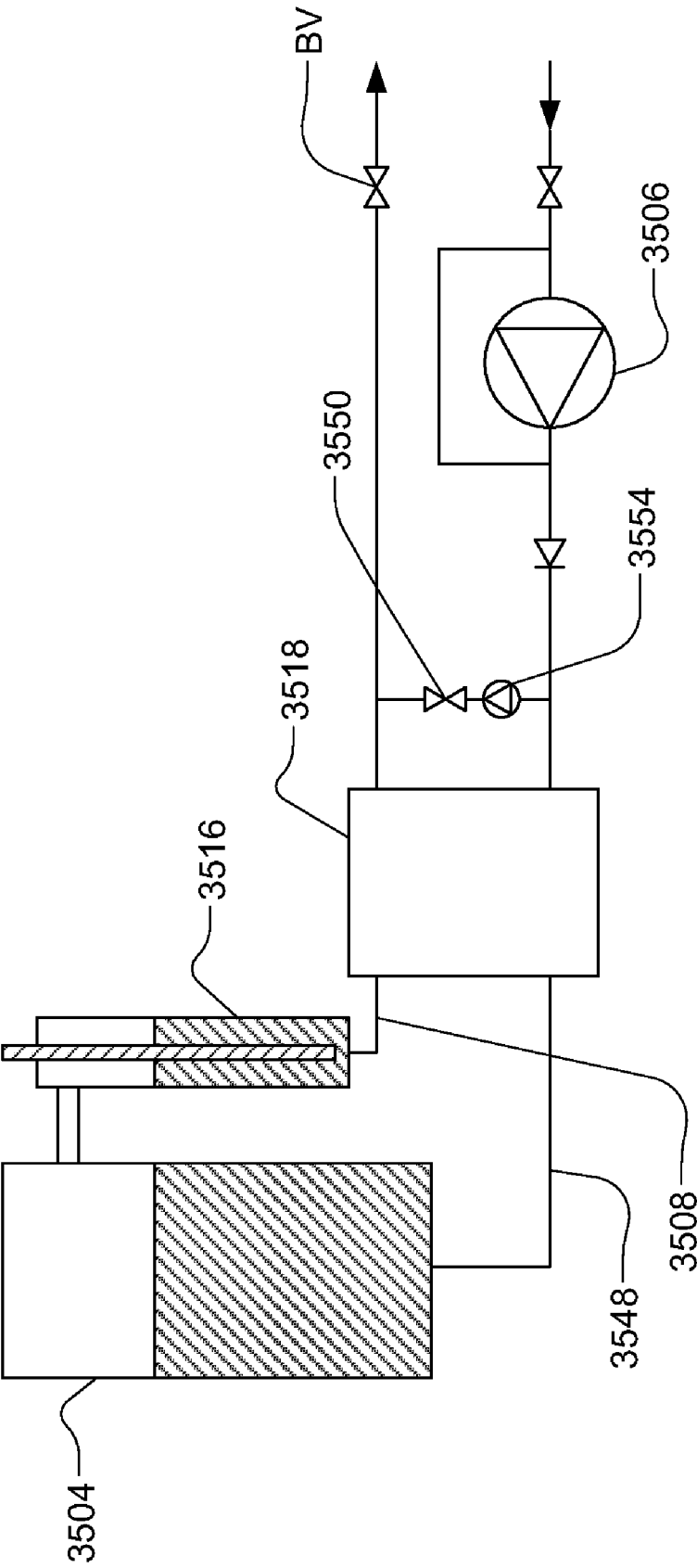


FIG. 35A

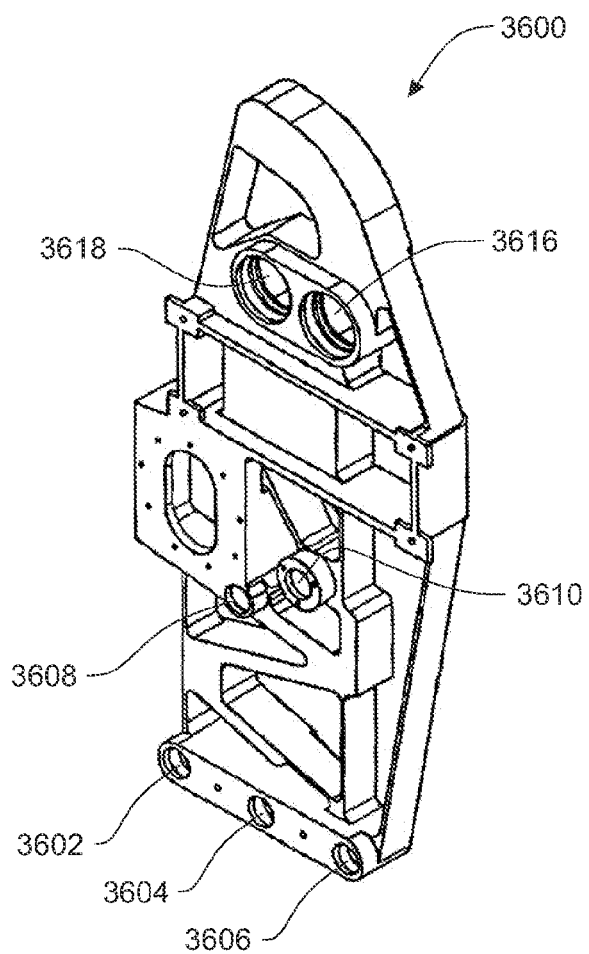


FIG. 36

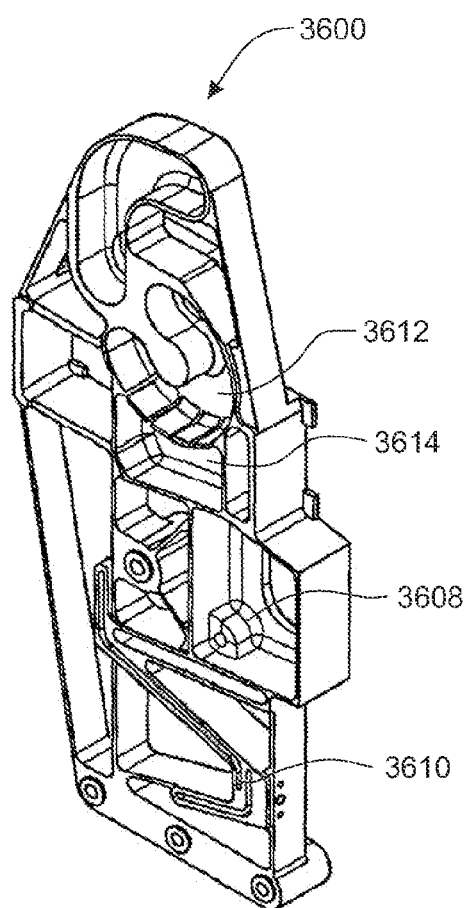


FIG. 36A

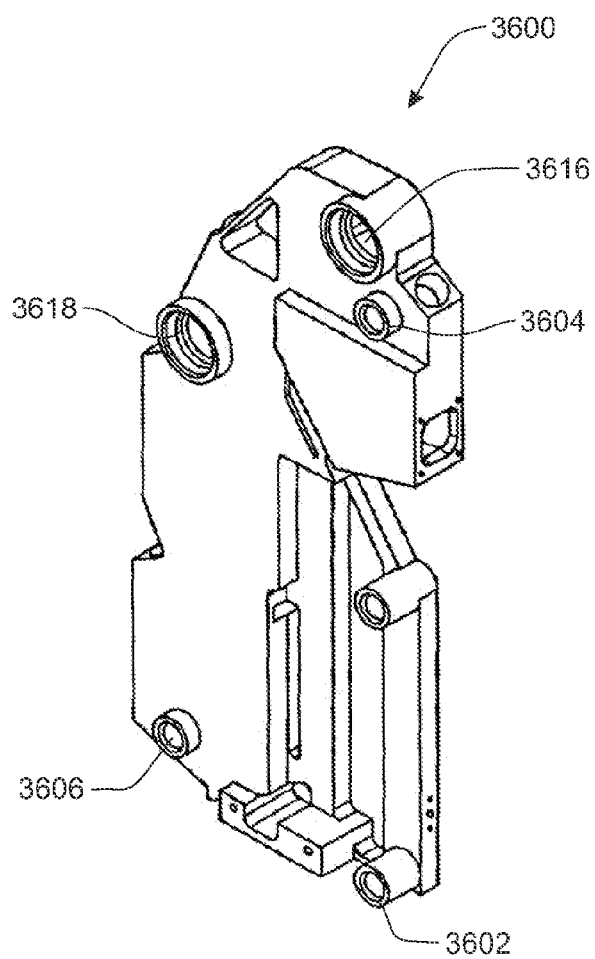


FIG. 36B

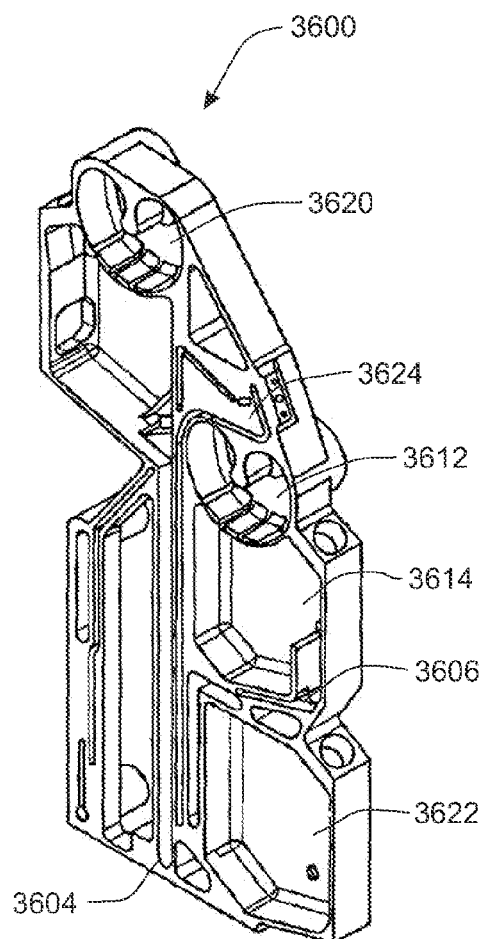


FIG. 36C

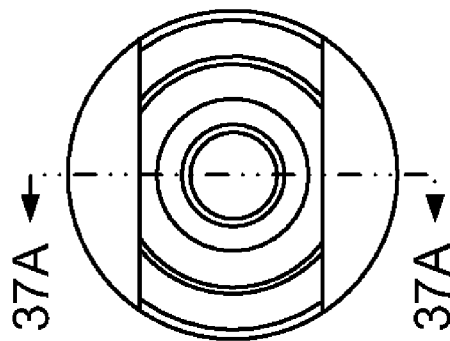


FIG. 37

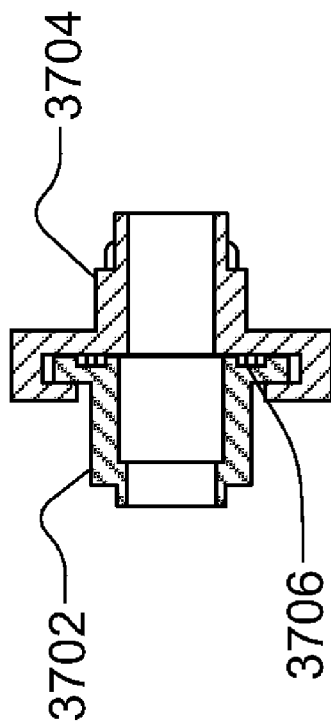
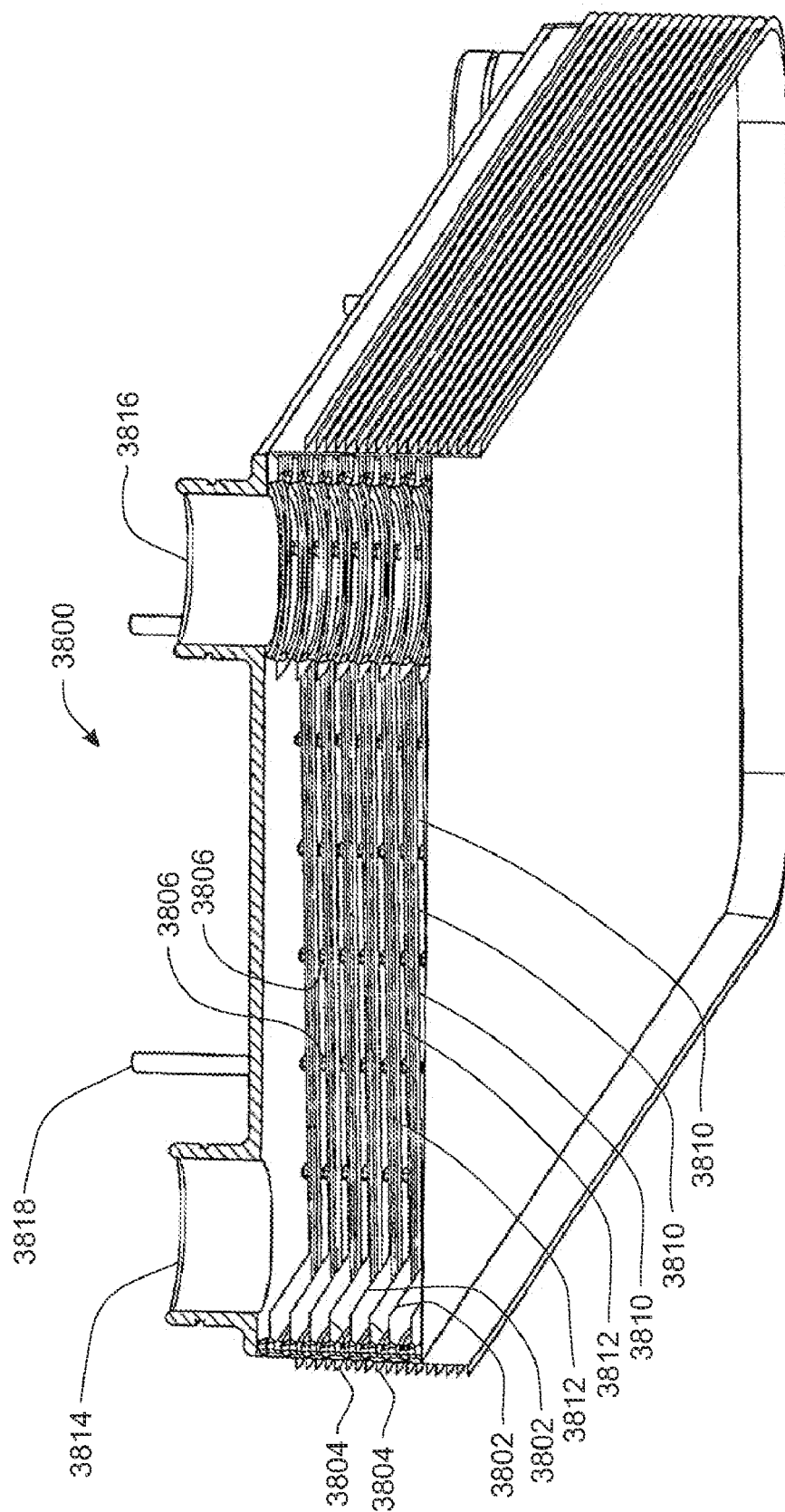


FIG. 37A



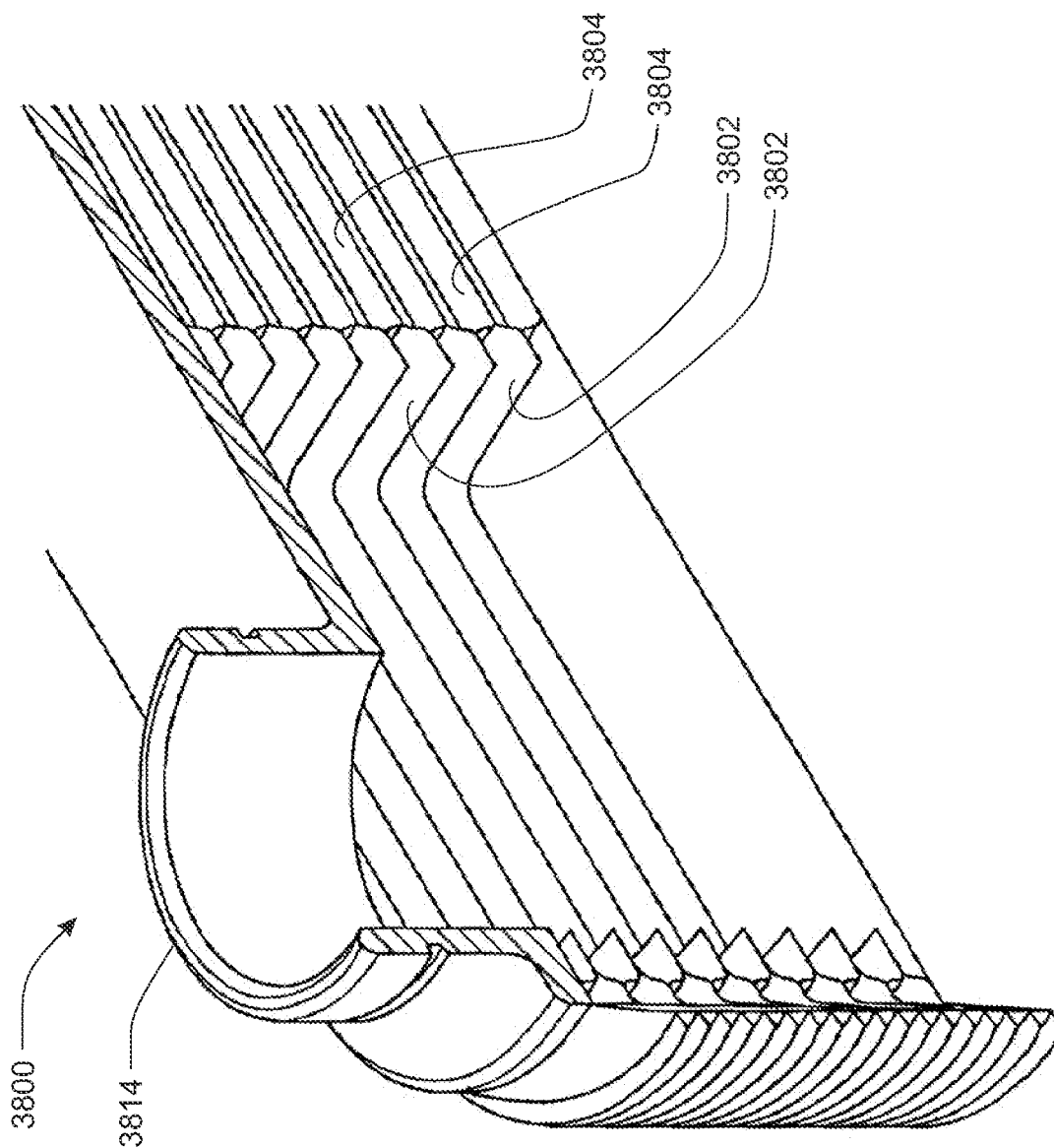


FIG. 38A

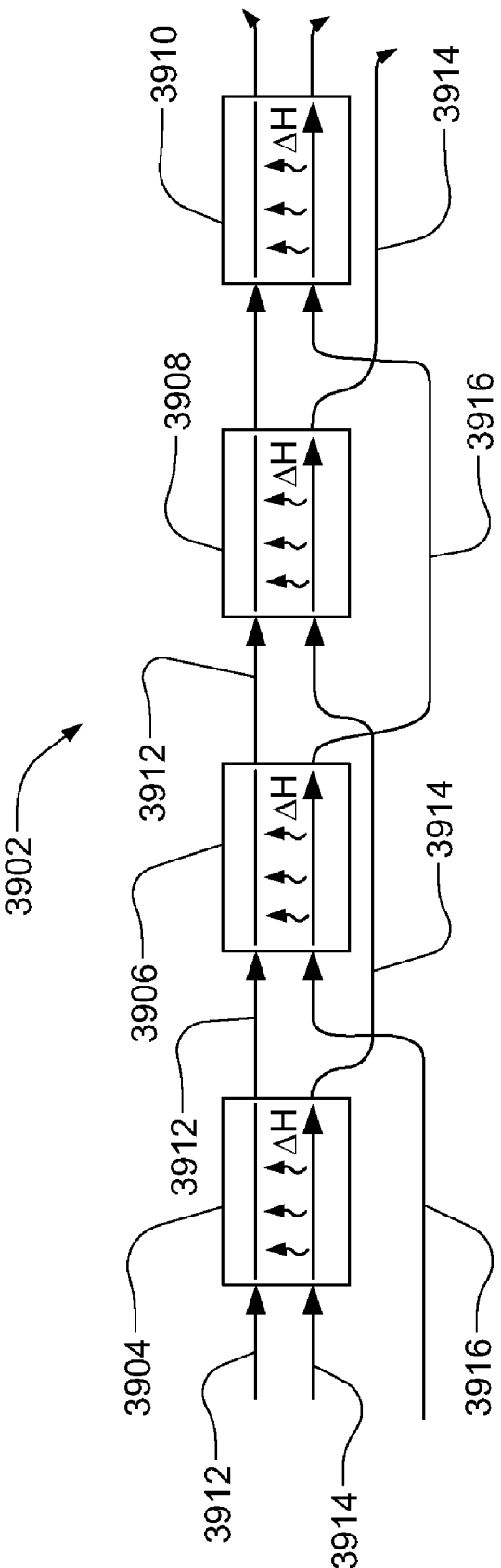


FIG. 39

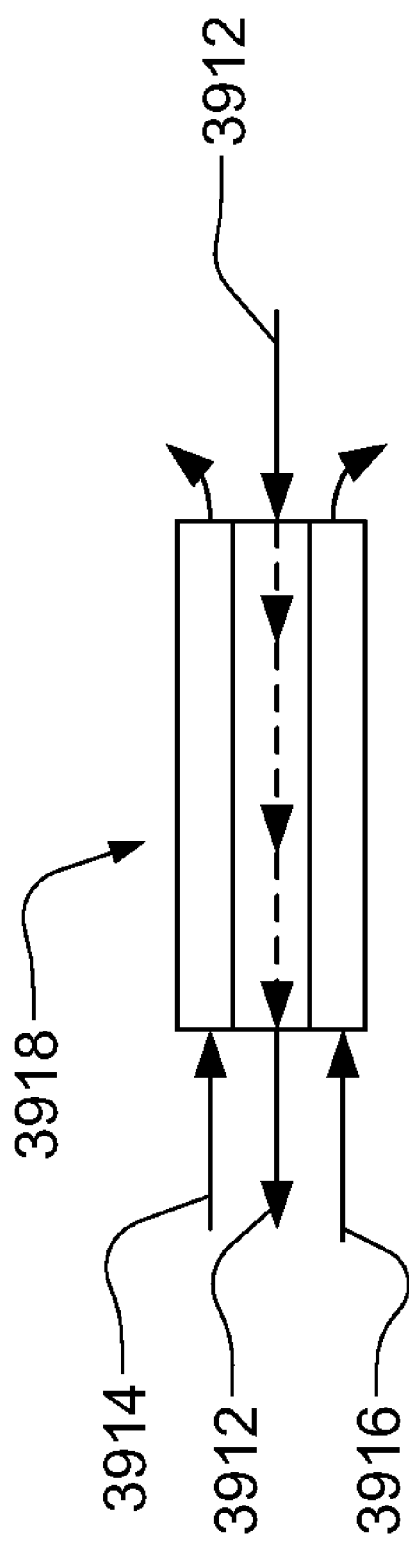


FIG. 39A

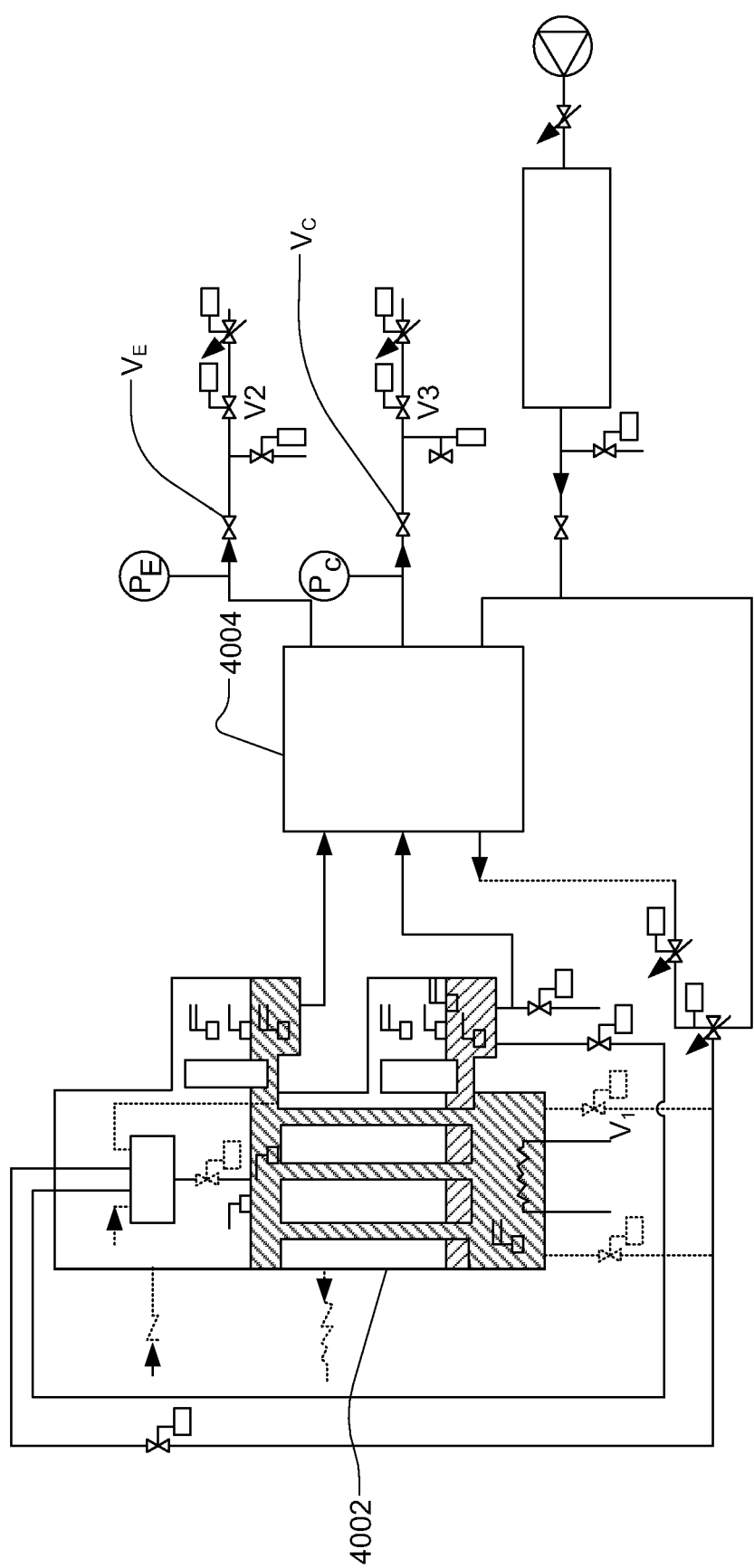


FIG. 40

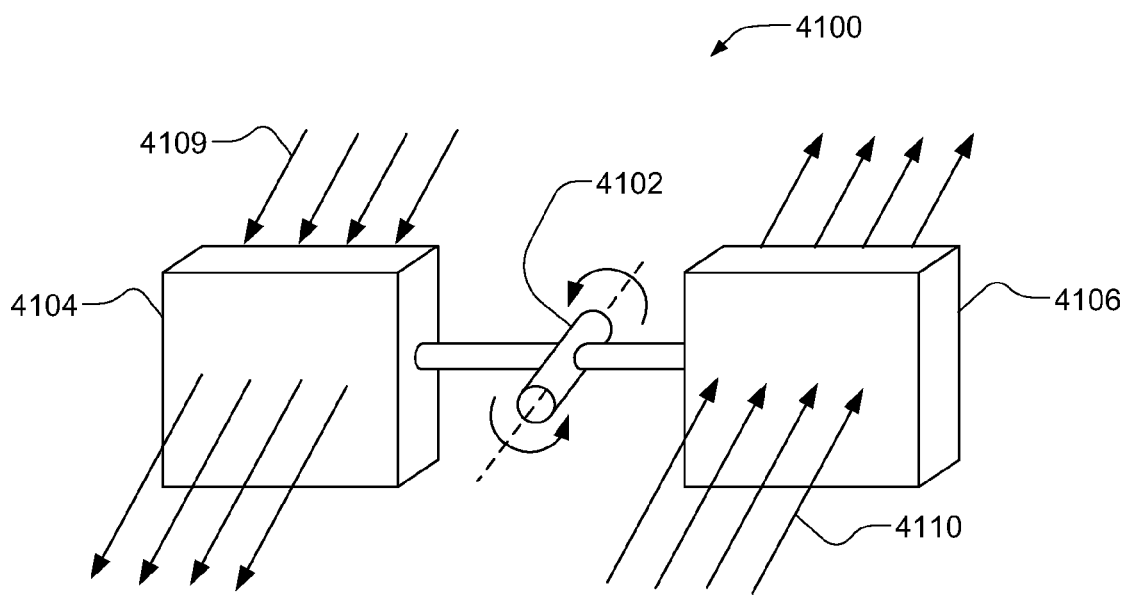


FIG. 41

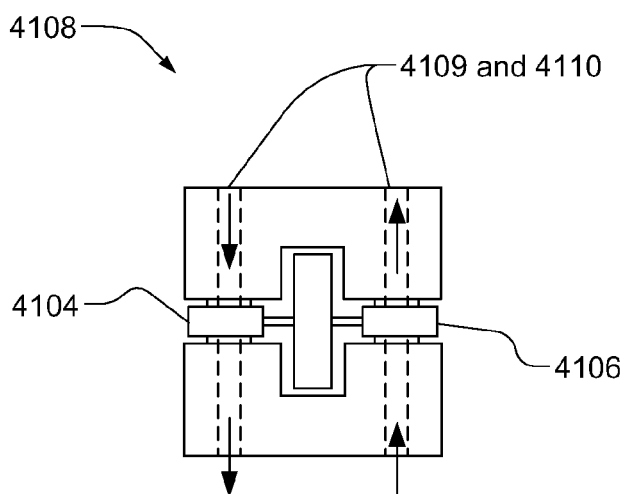
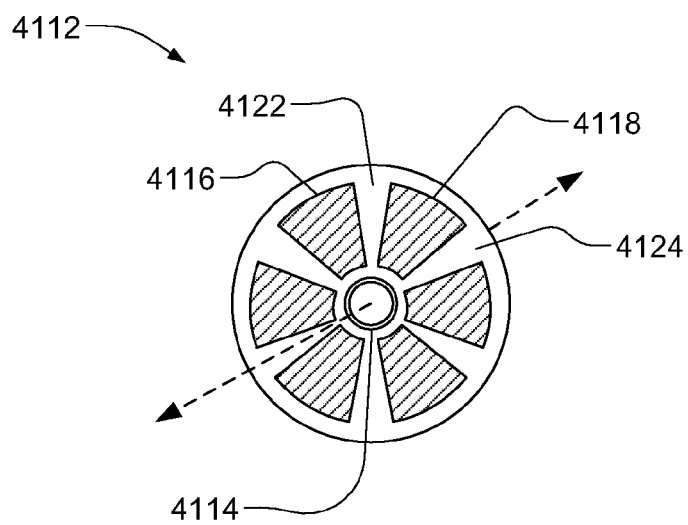
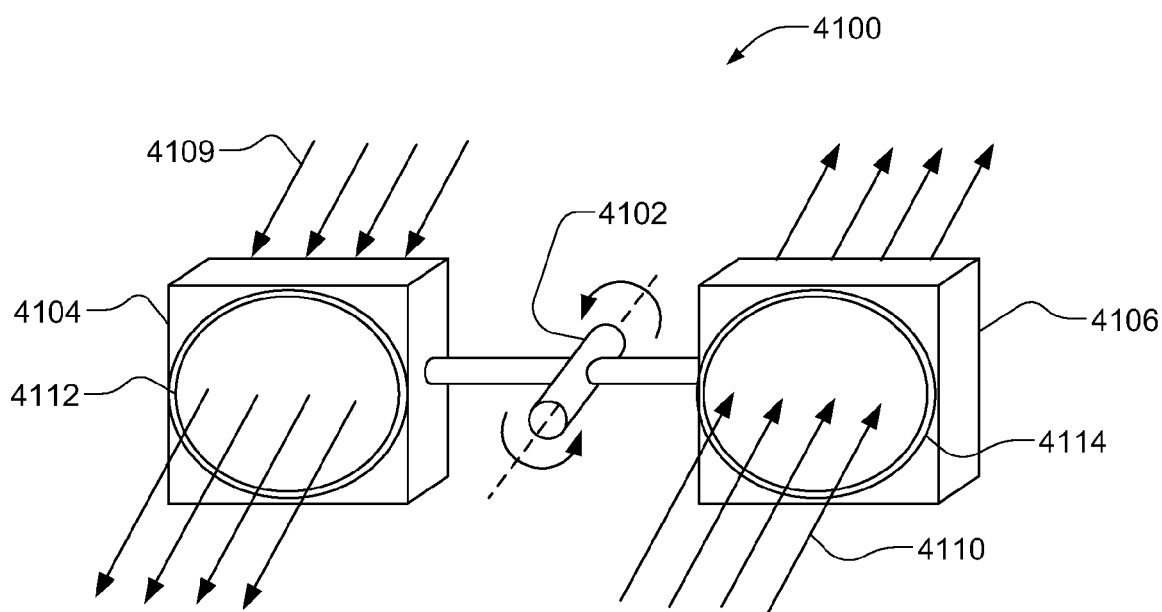


FIG. 41A



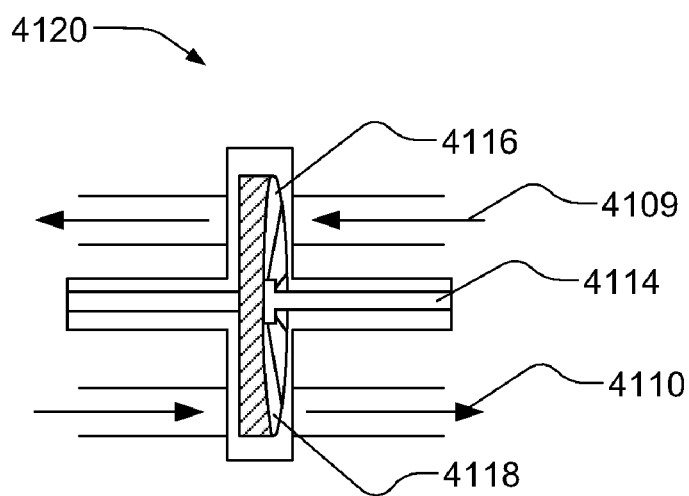


FIG. 41D

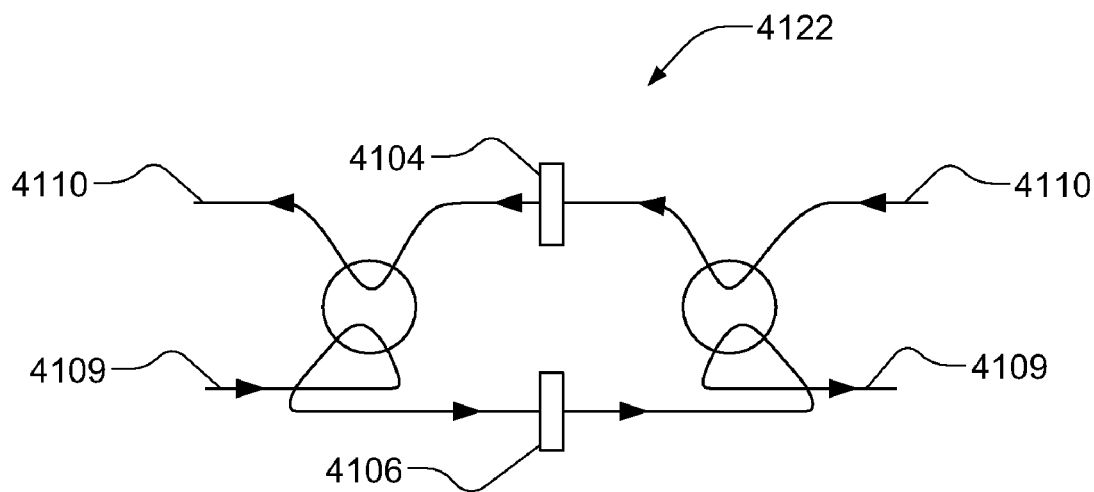


FIG. 41E

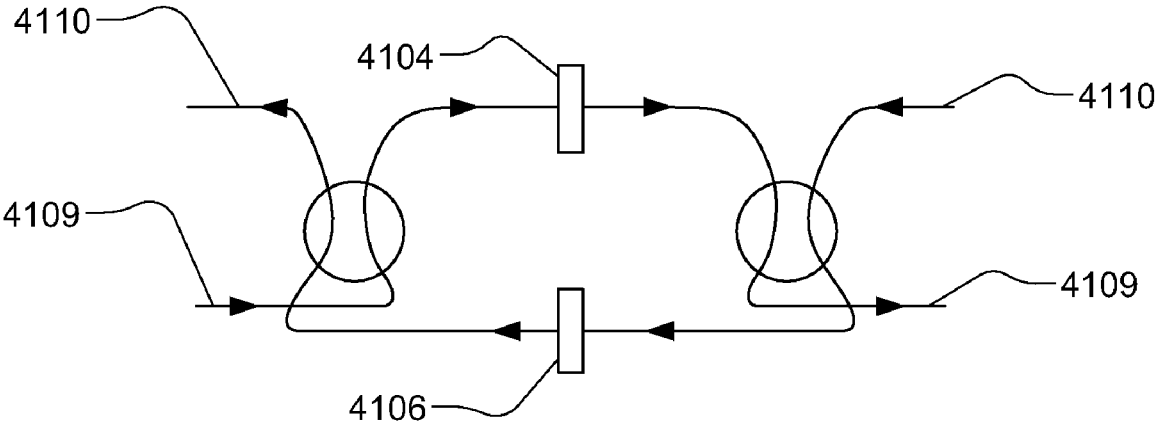
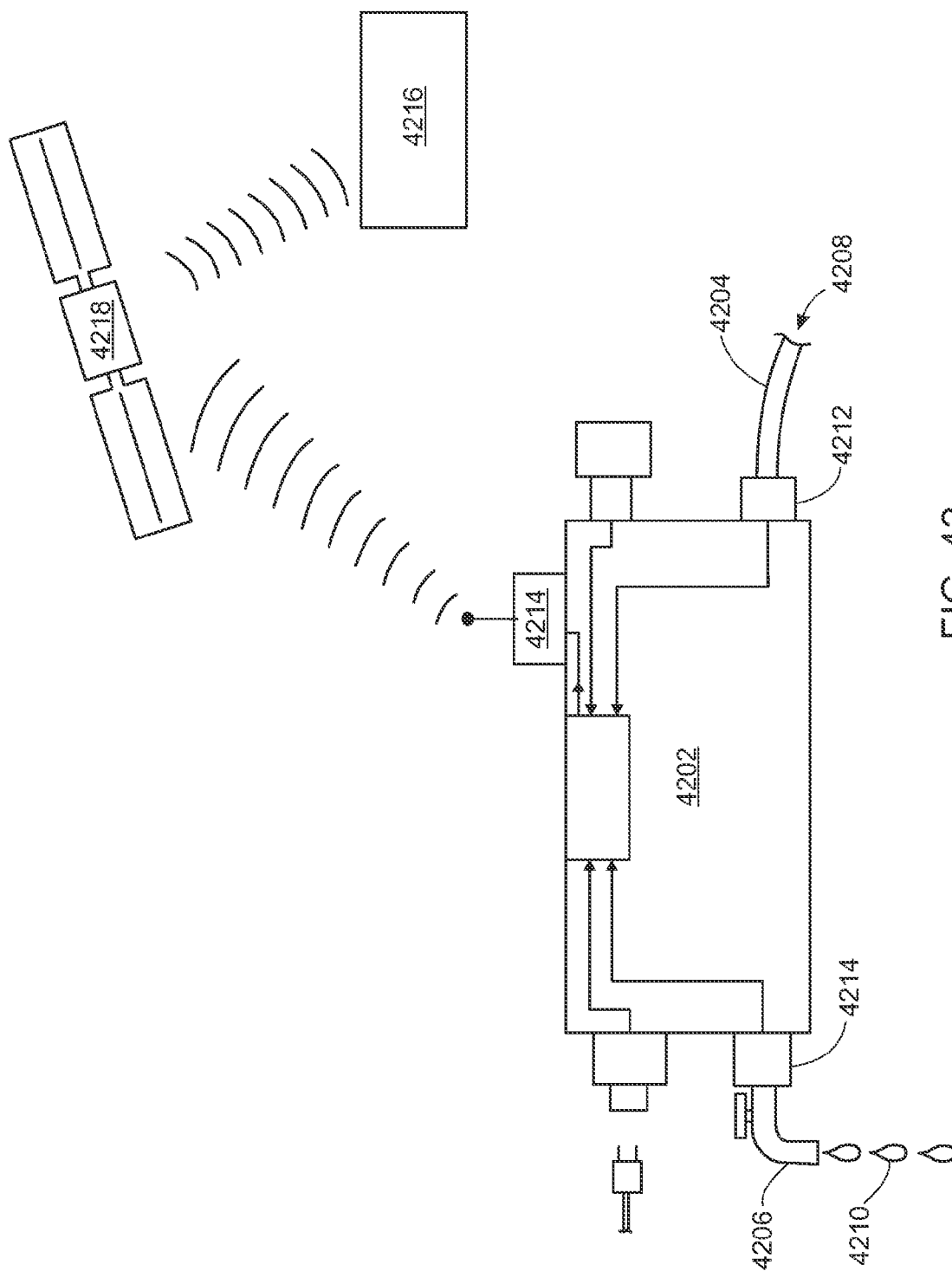


FIG. 41F



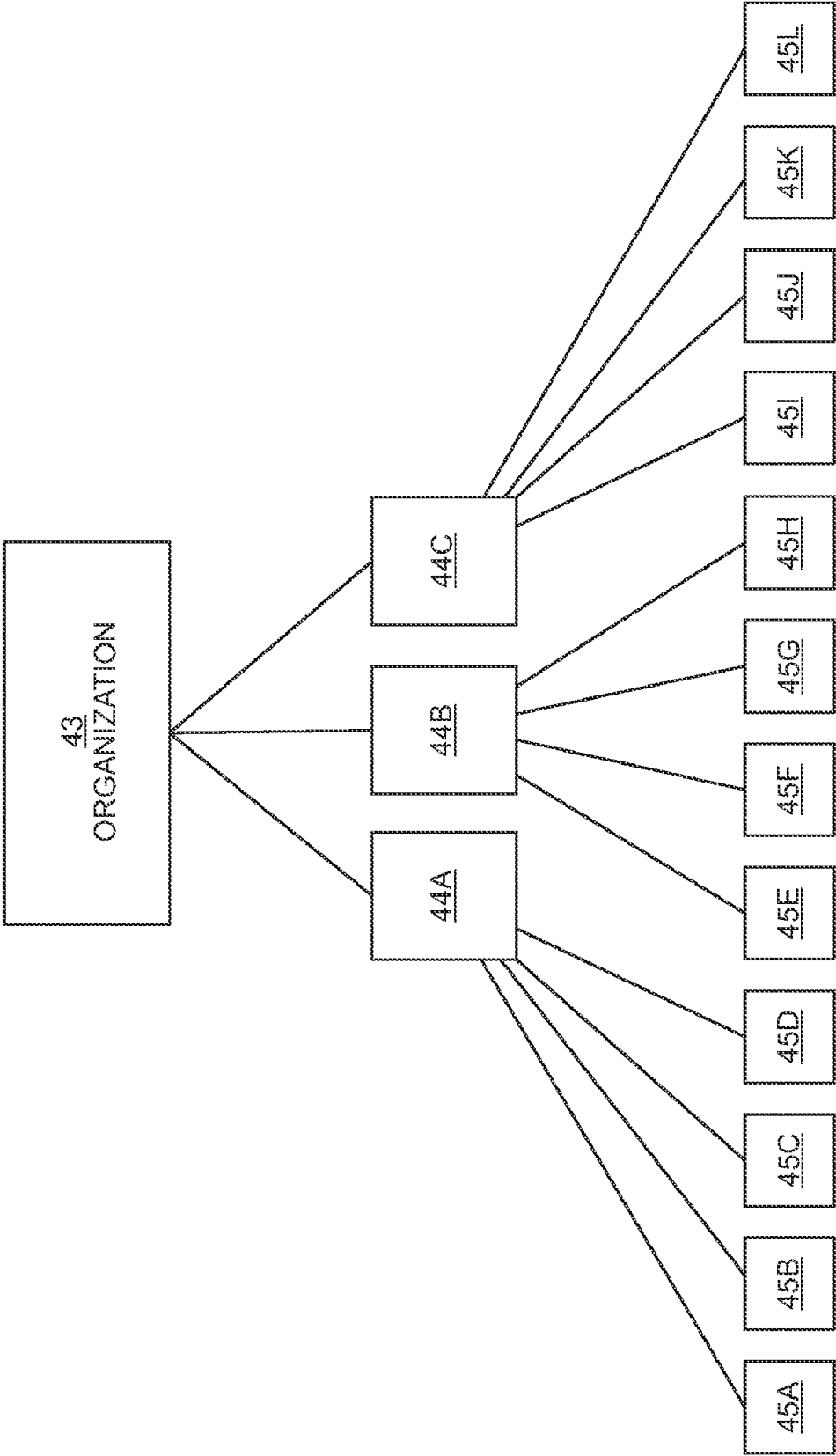


FIG.43

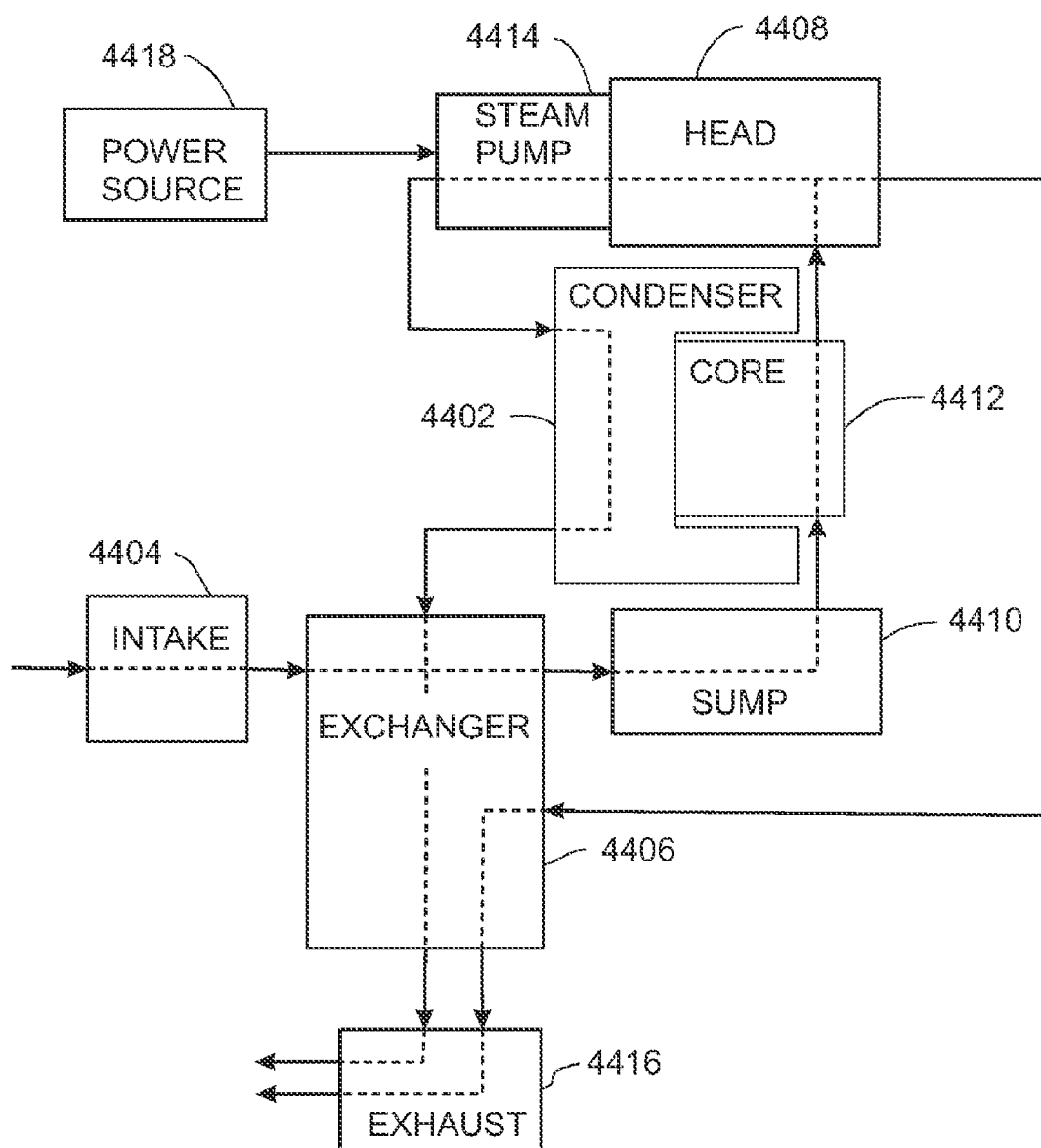


FIG.44

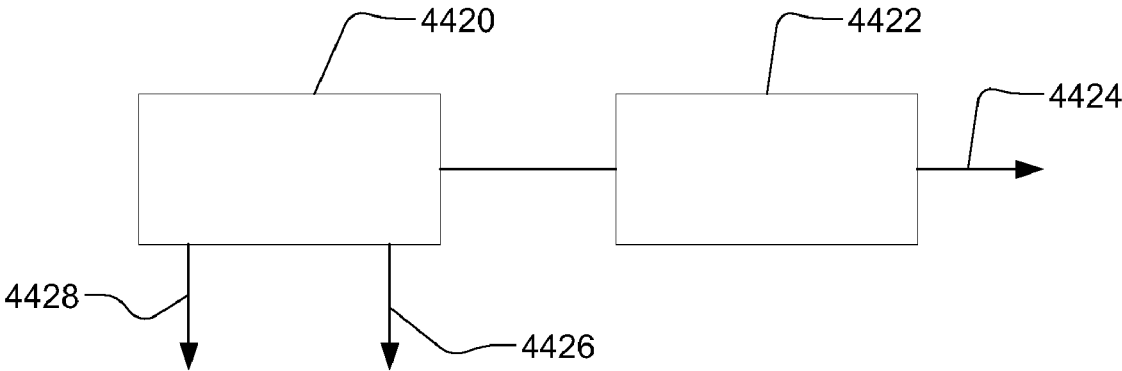
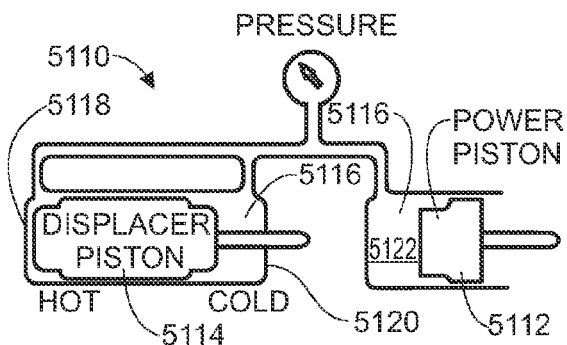
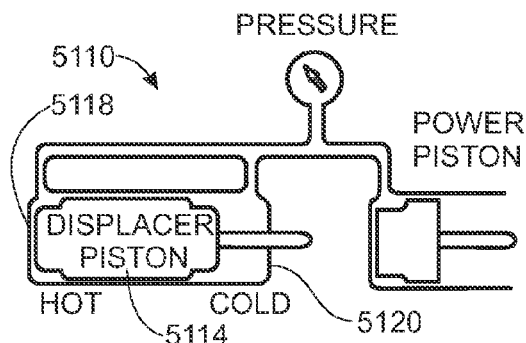


FIG. 44A



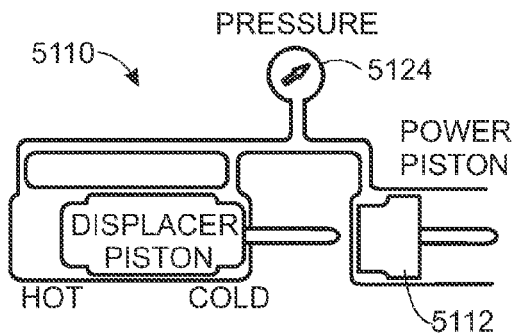
READY FOR START OF
COMPRESSION STROKE

FIG. 51A
PRIOR ART



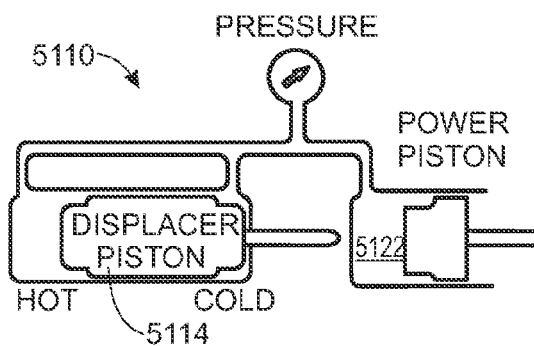
END OF COMPRESSION STROKE

FIG. 51B
PRIOR ART



READY FOR START OF
EXPANSION STROKE

FIG. 51C
PRIOR ART



END OF EXPANSION STROKE

FIG. 51D
PRIOR ART

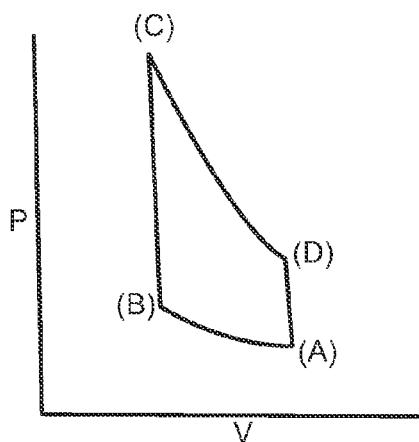


FIG. 51E
PRIOR ART

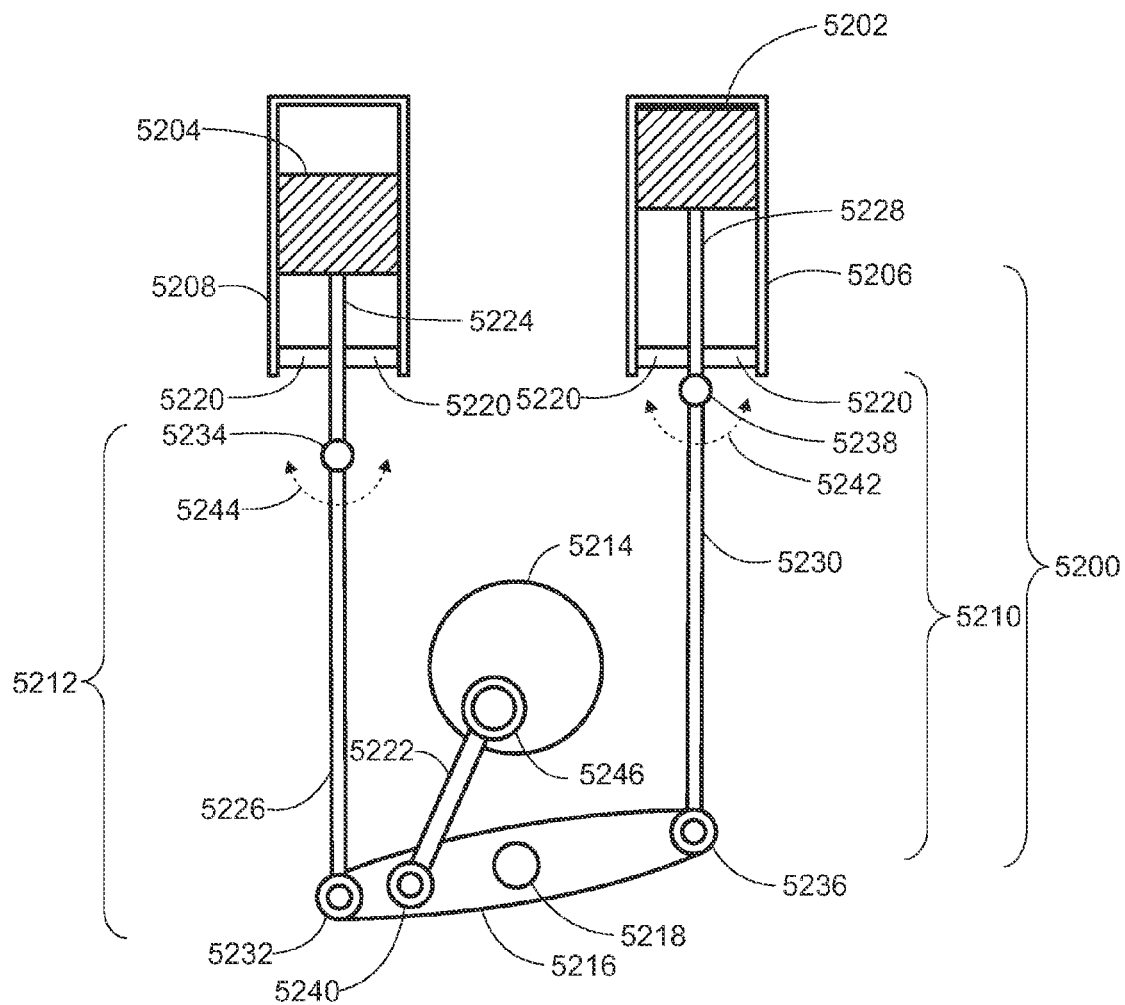


FIG. 52

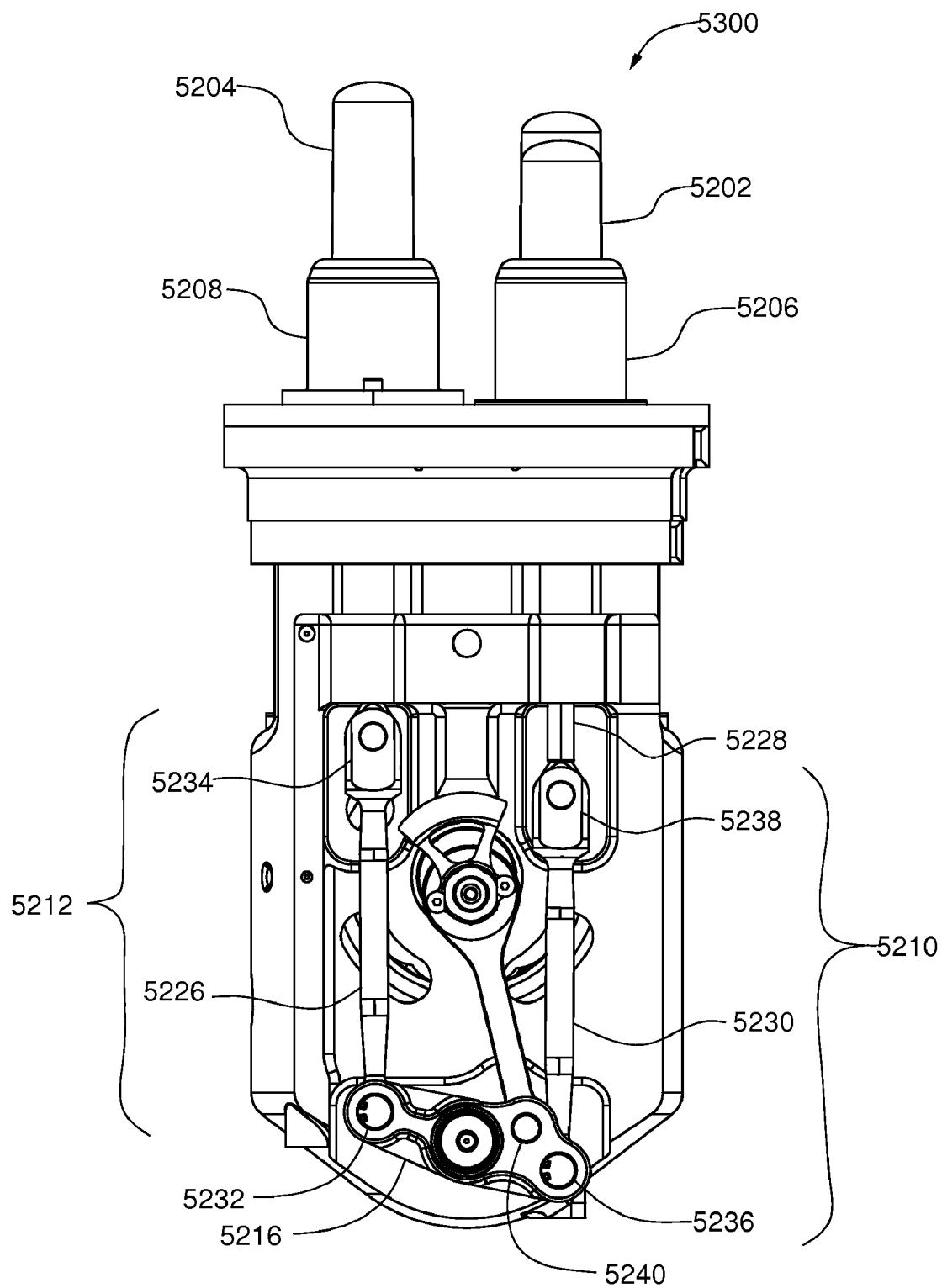


FIG. 53

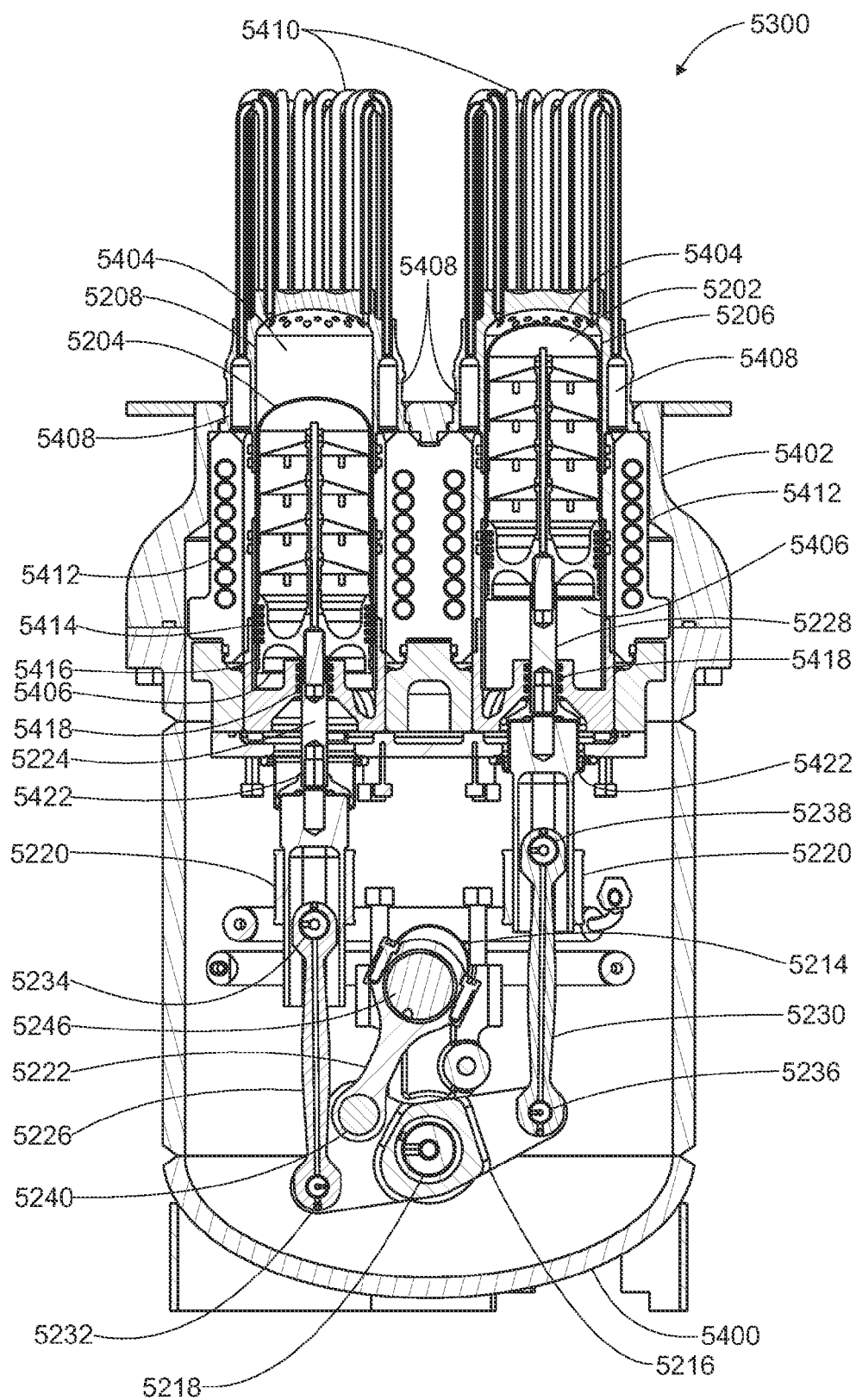


FIG. 54

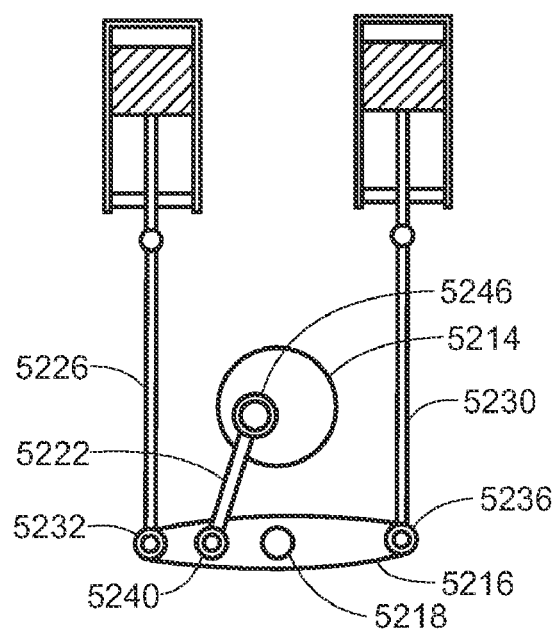


FIG. 55A

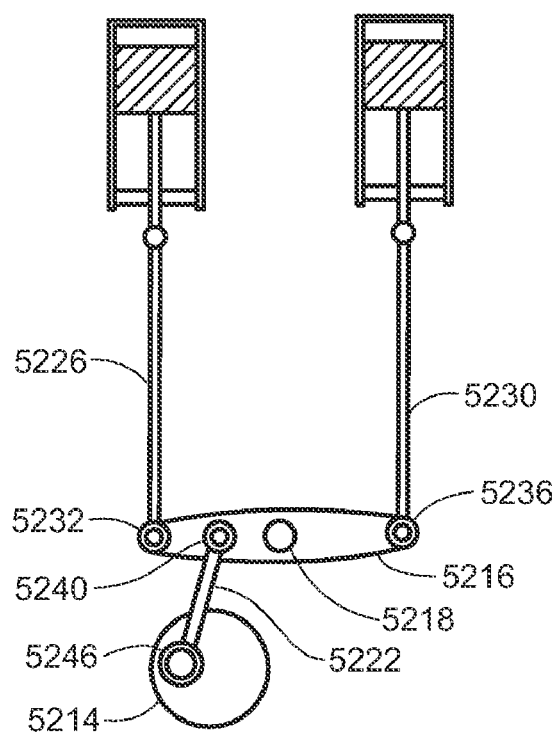


FIG. 55B

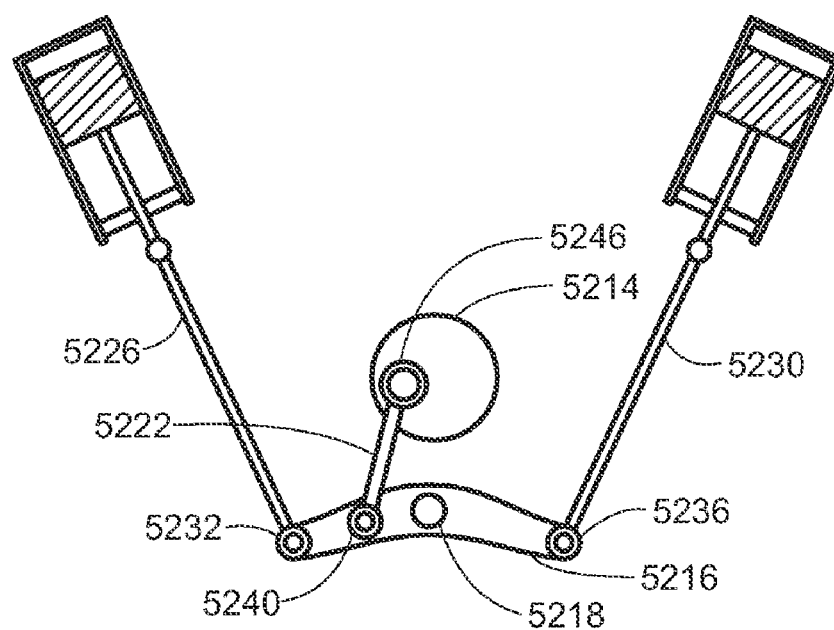


FIG. 55C

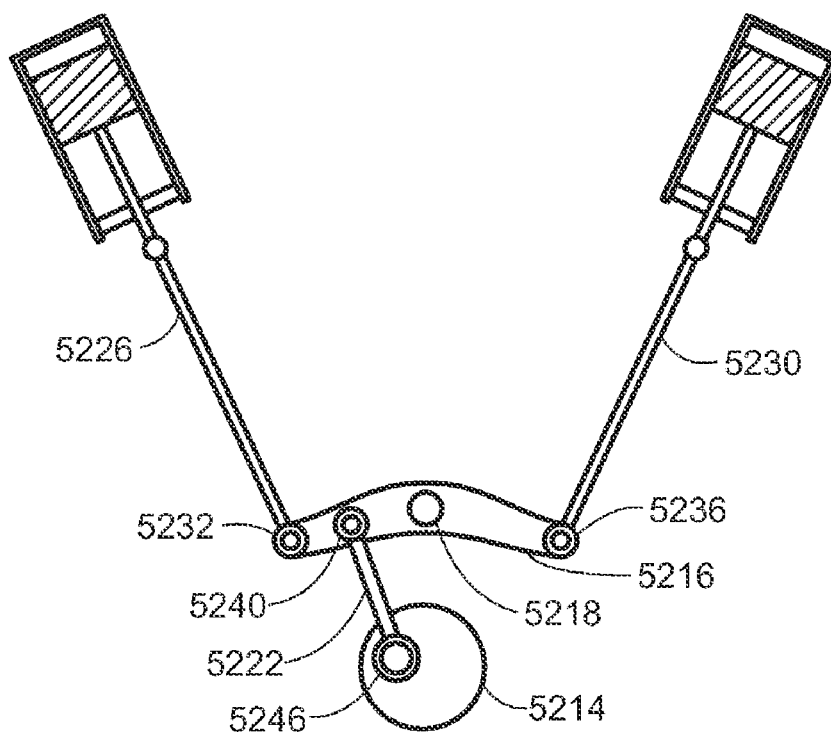


FIG. 55D

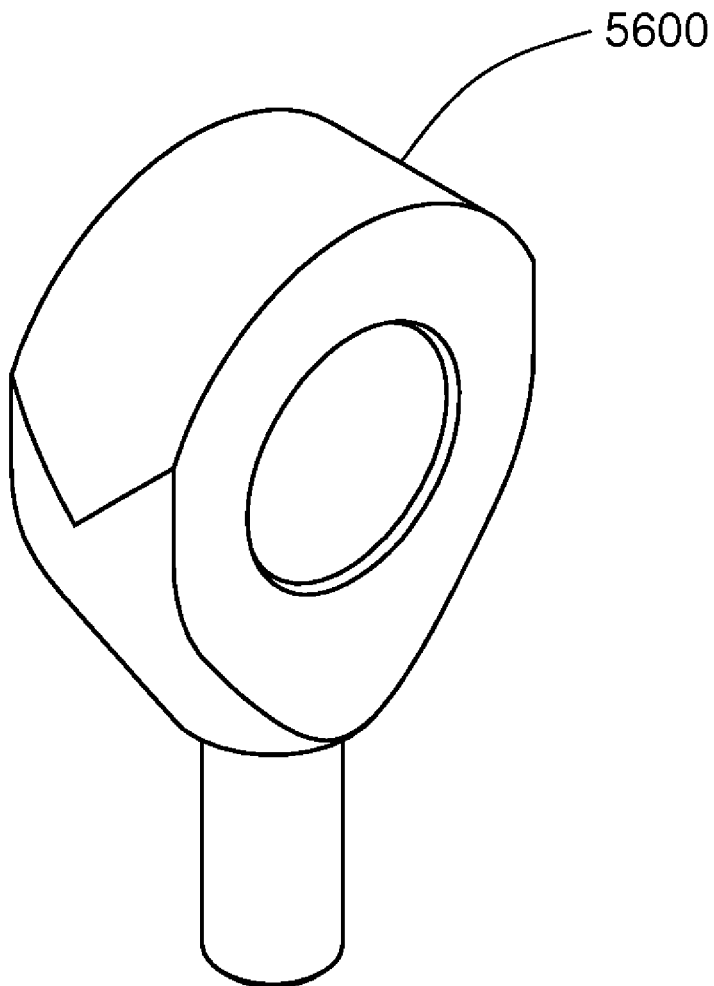


FIG. 56

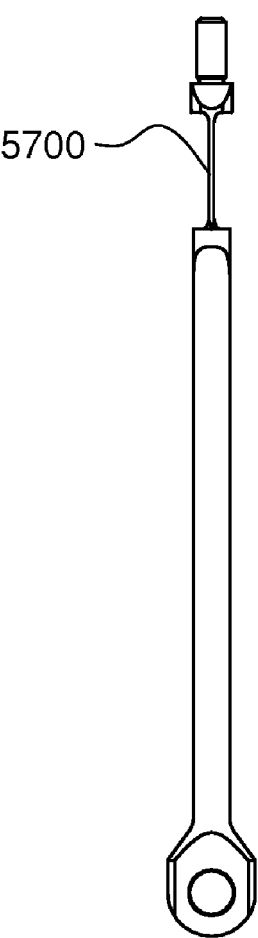


FIG. 57A

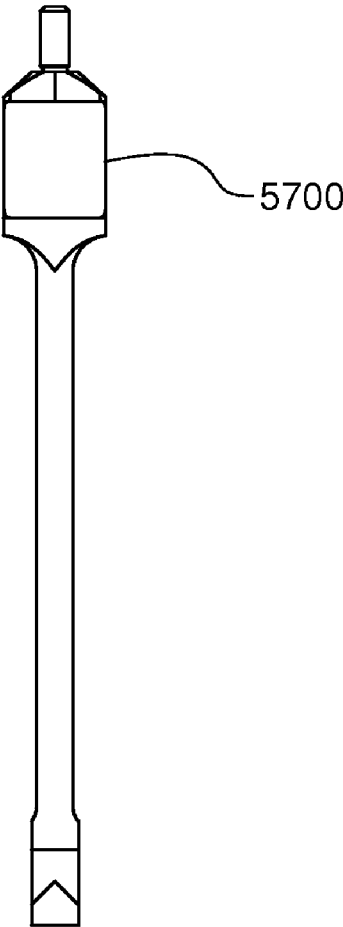


FIG. 57B

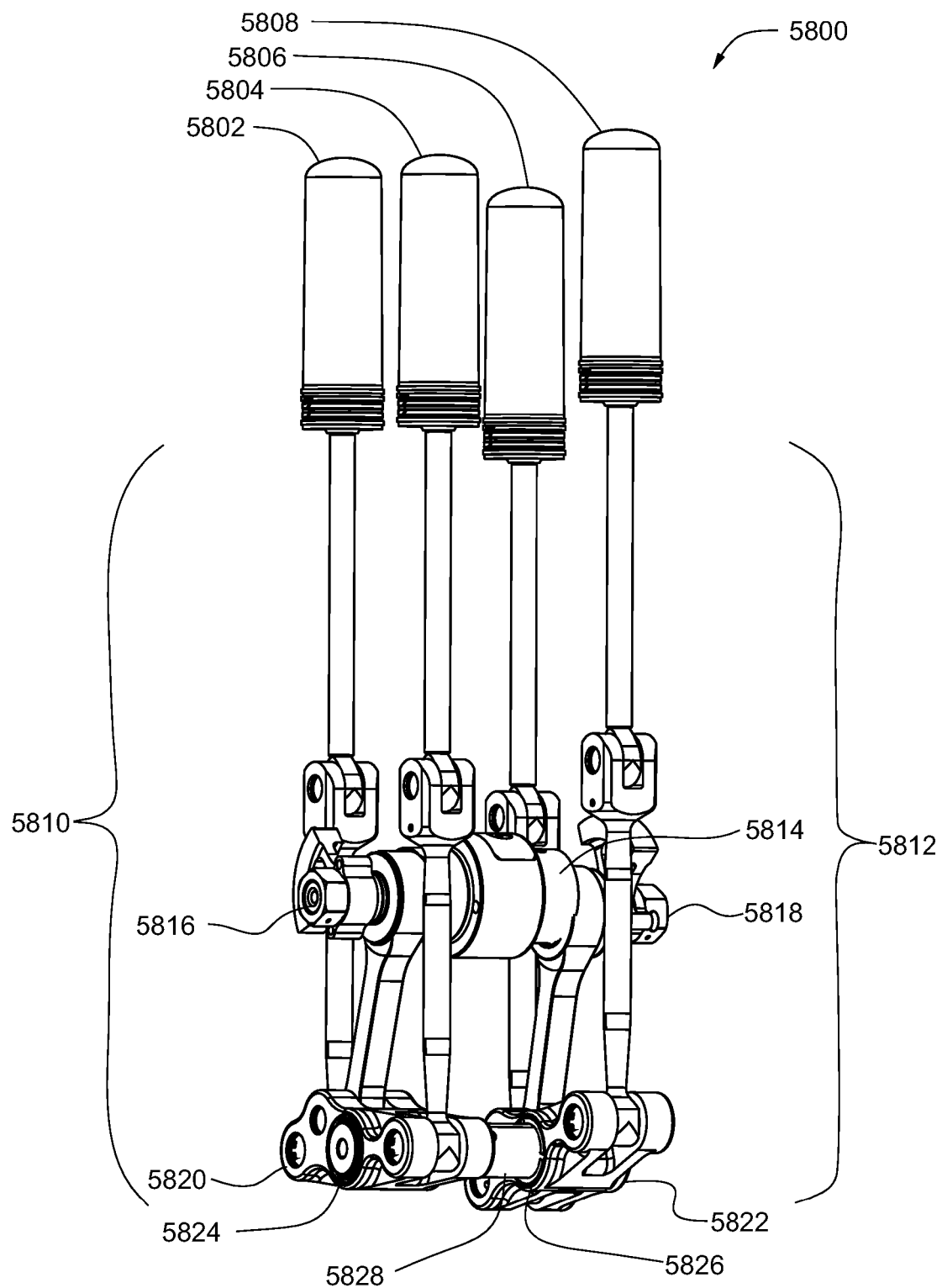


FIG. 58

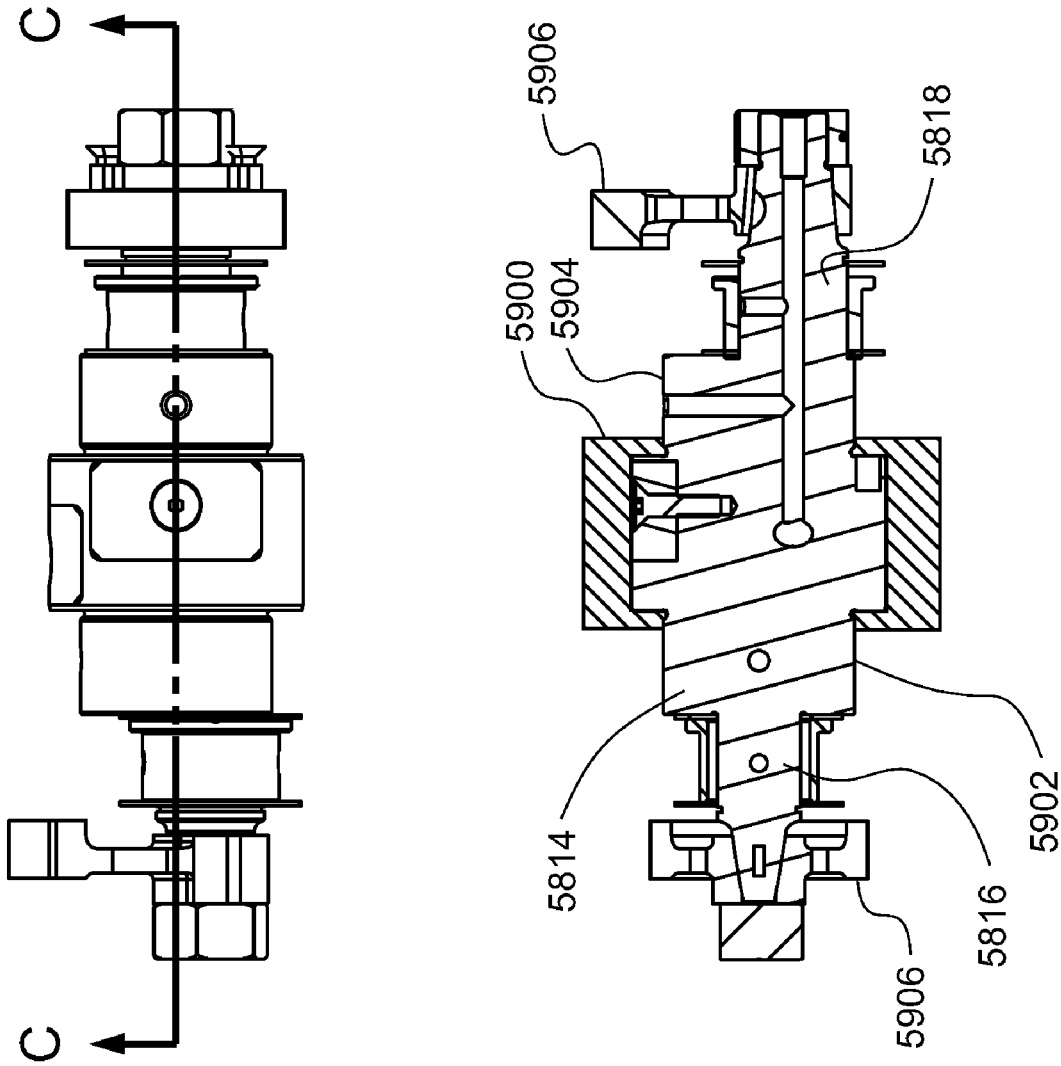


FIG. 59

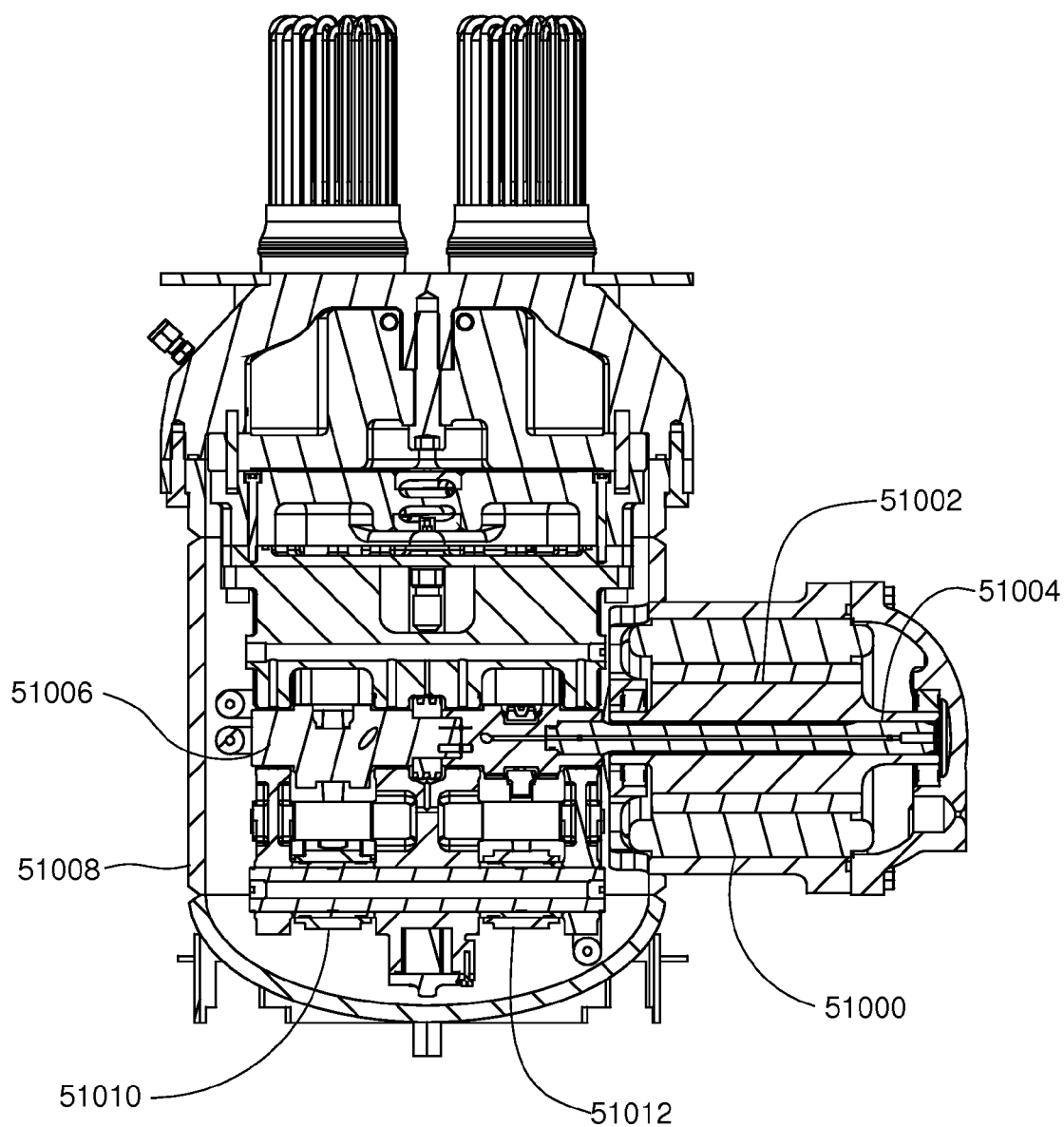
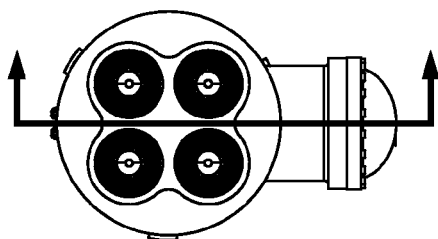


FIG. 510A

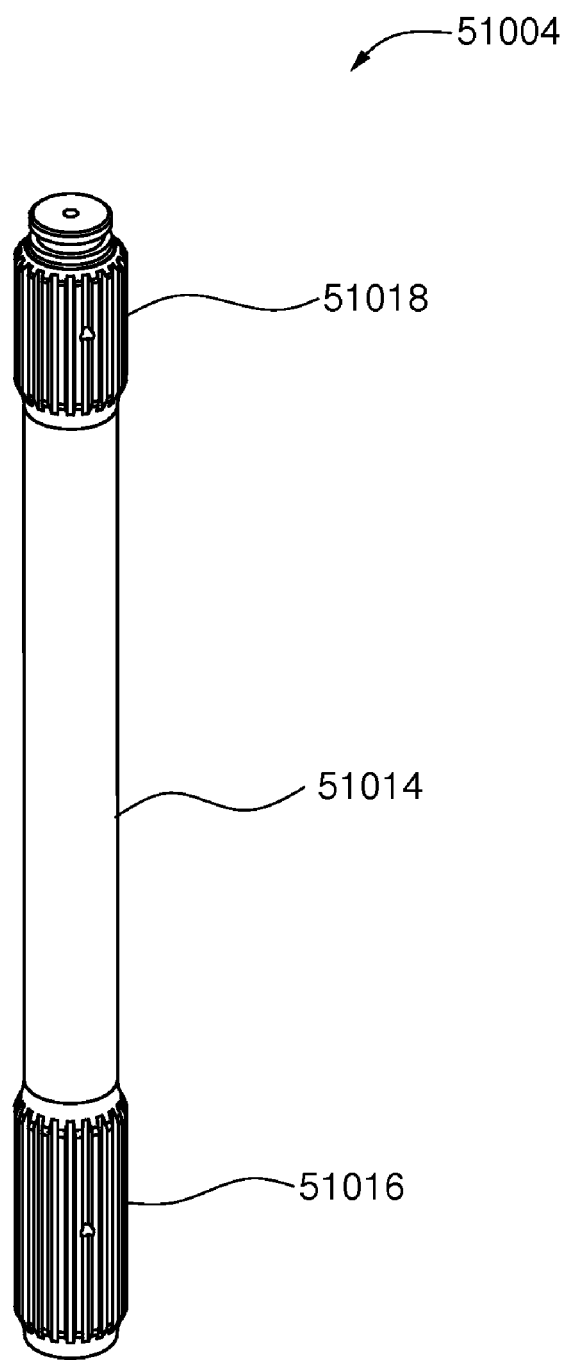


FIG. 510B

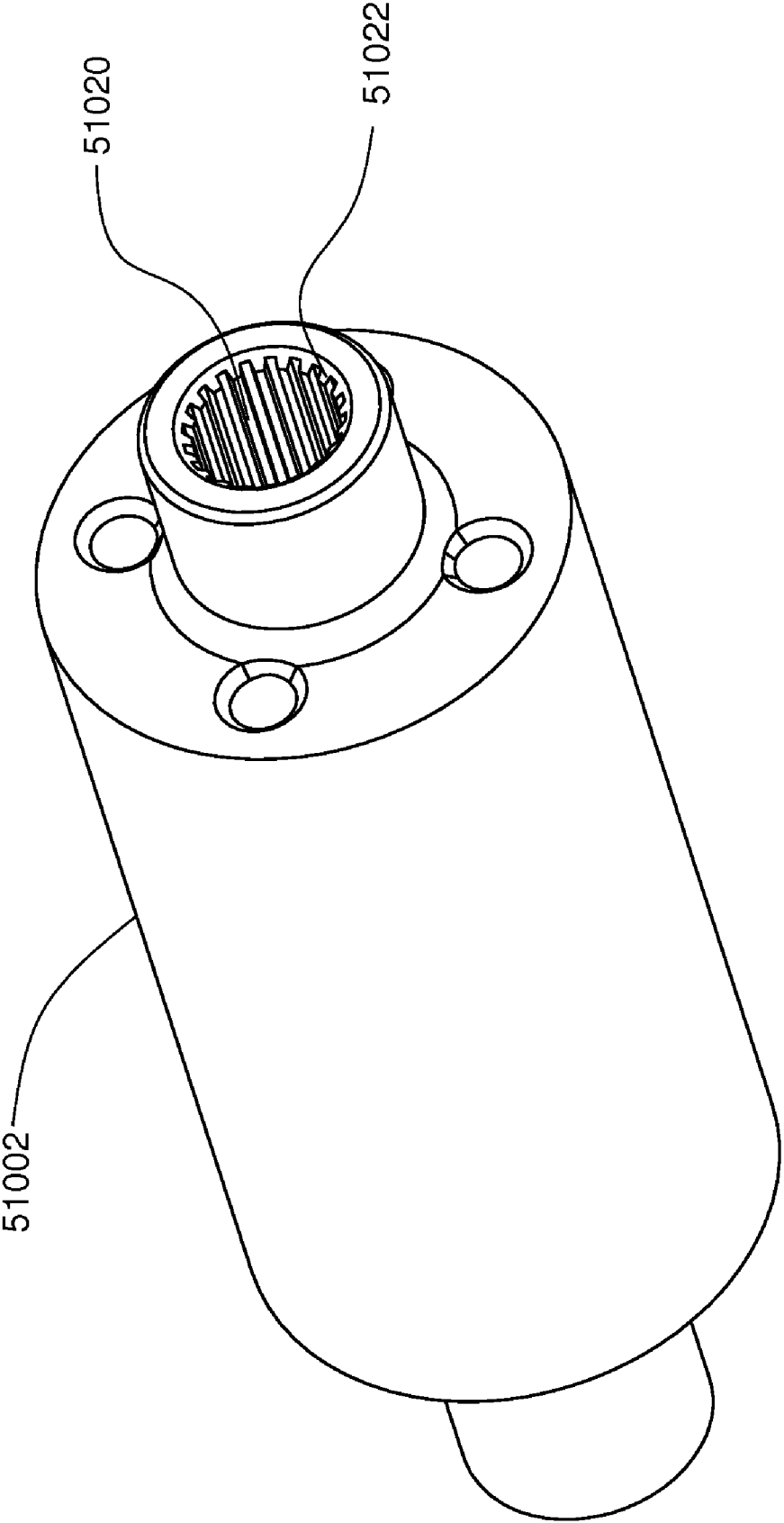


FIG. 510C

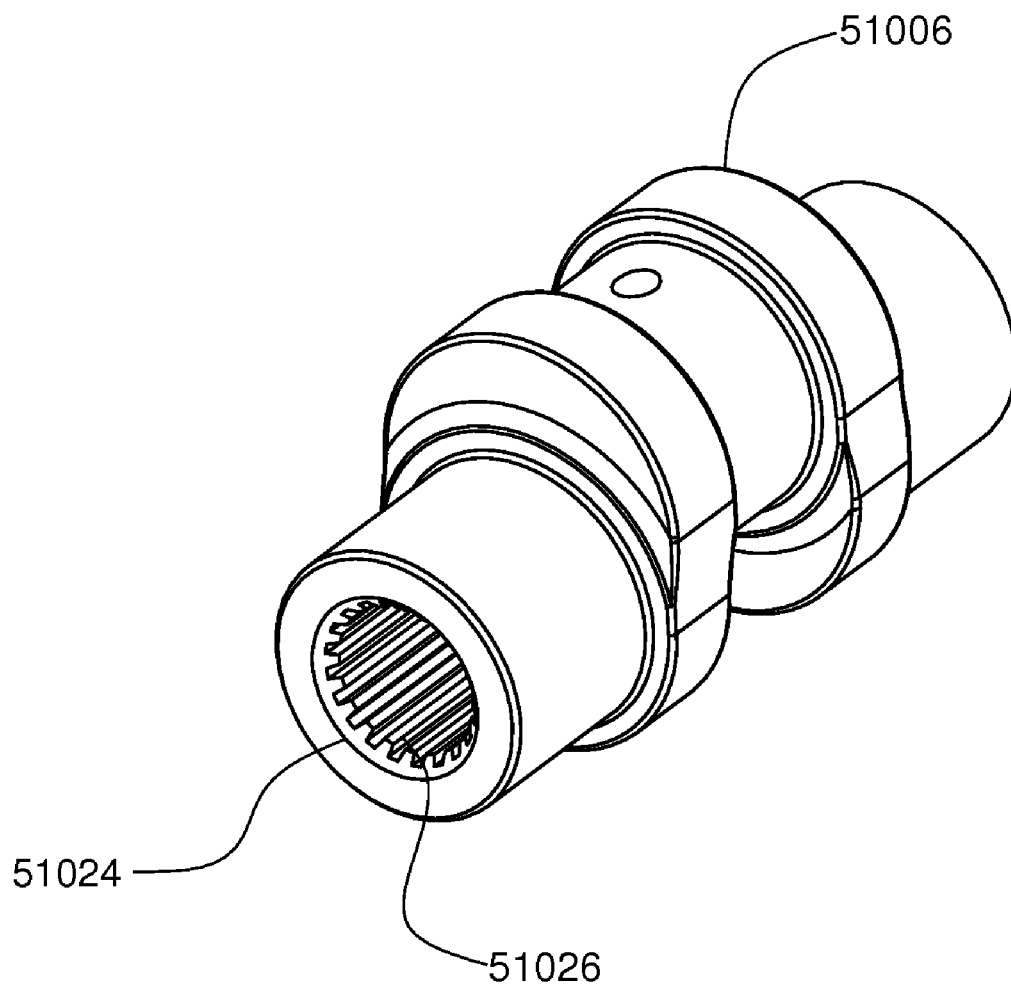


FIG. 510D

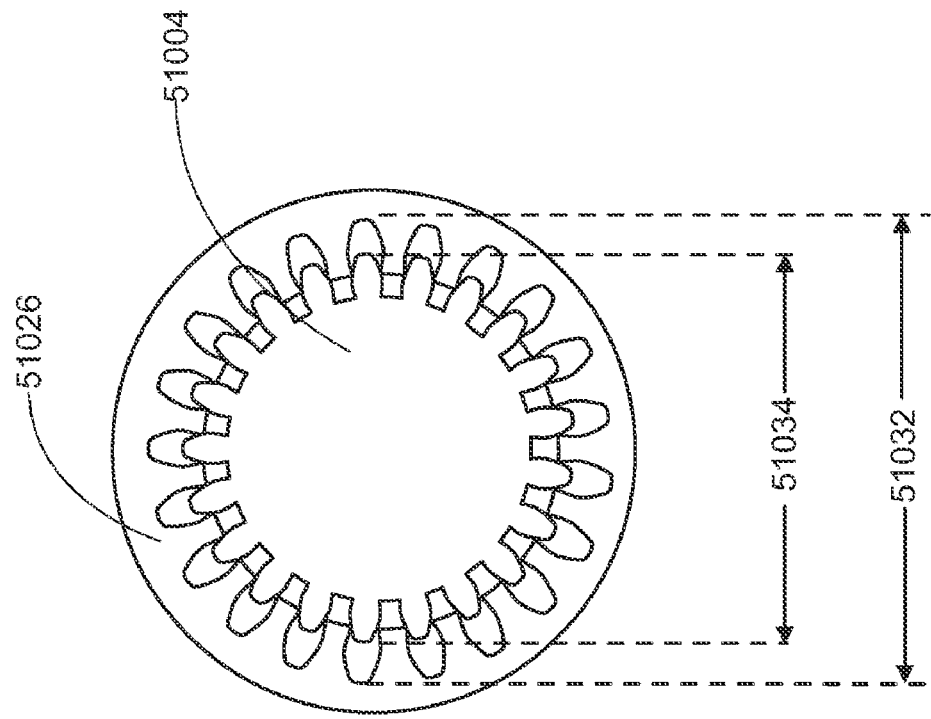


FIG. 510F

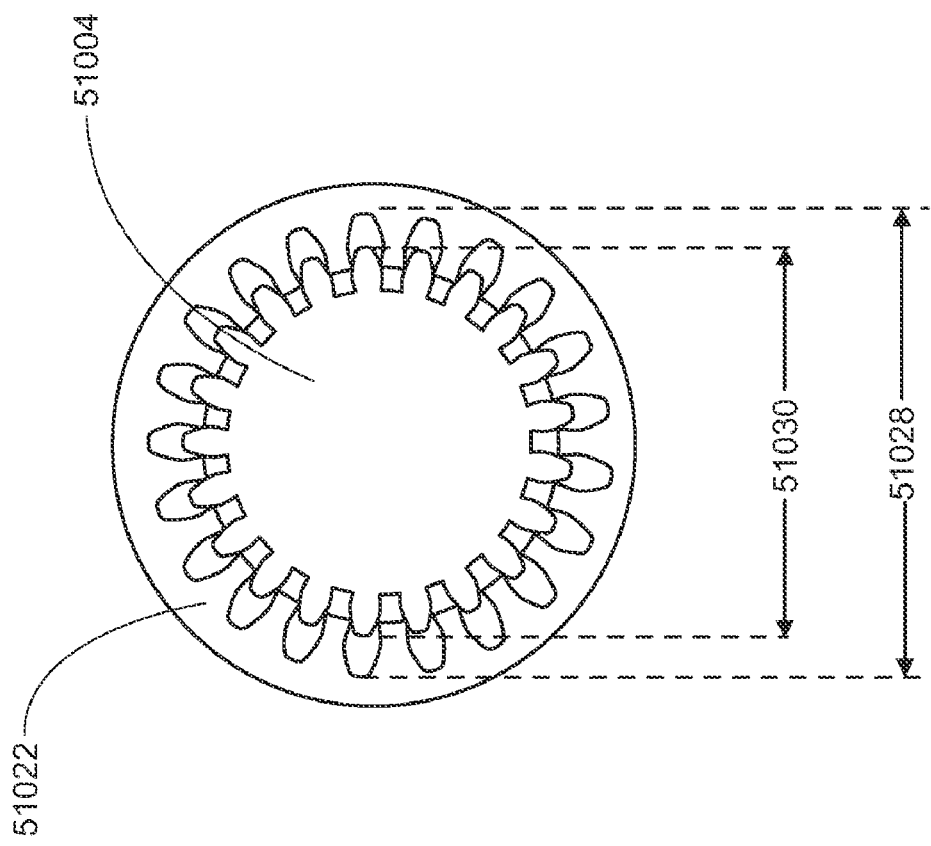


FIG. 510E

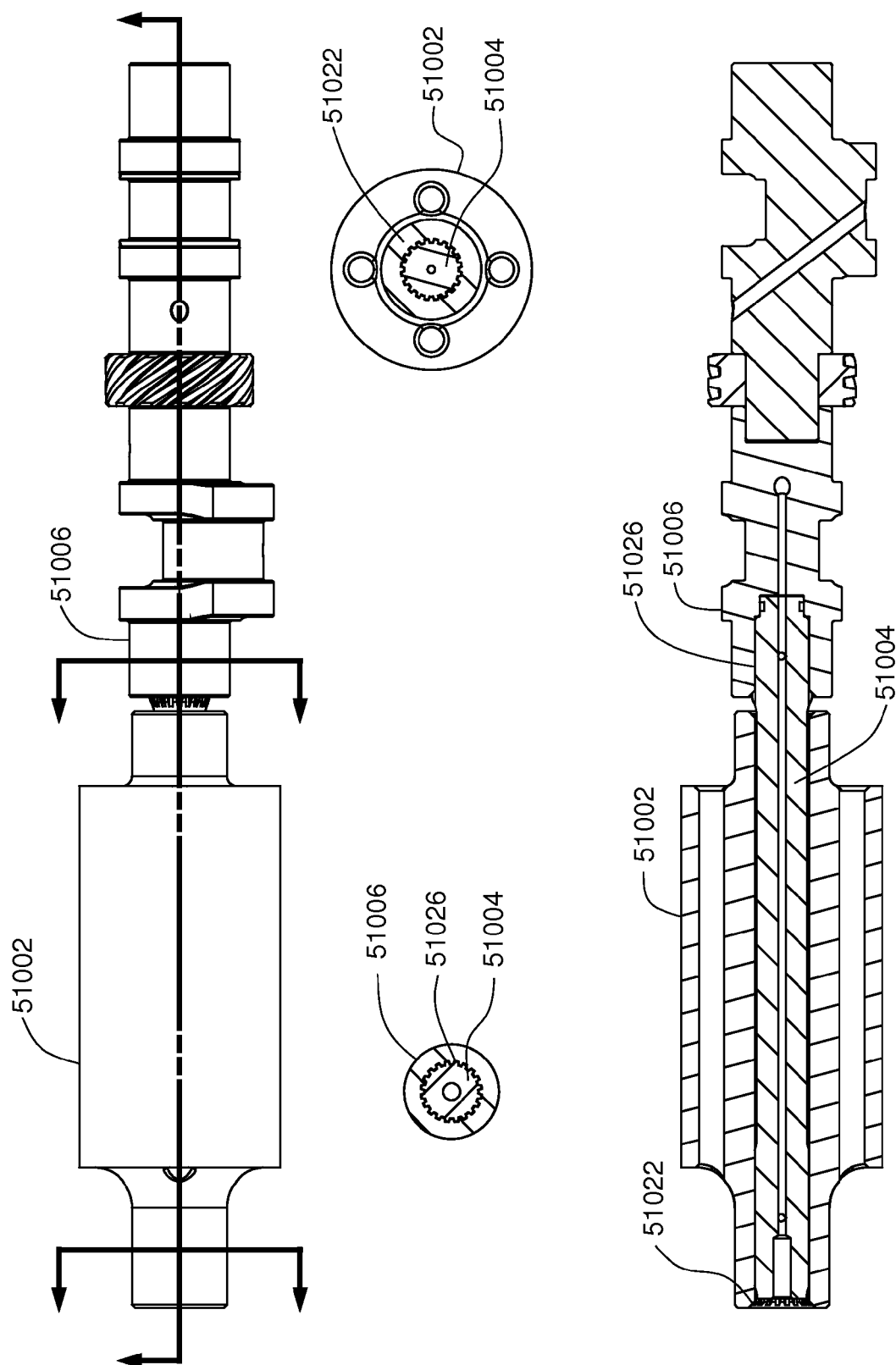


FIG. 510G

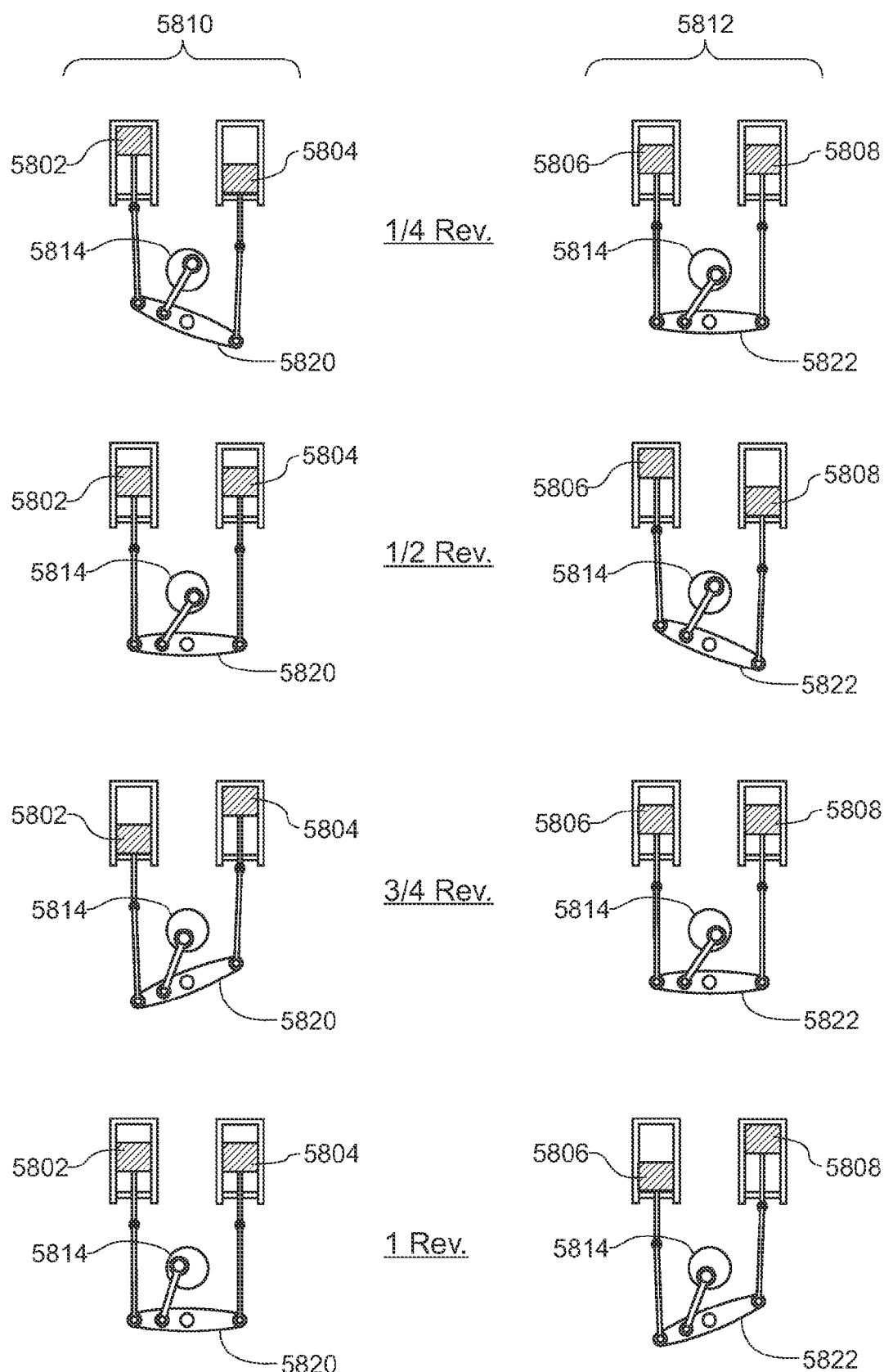


FIG. 511

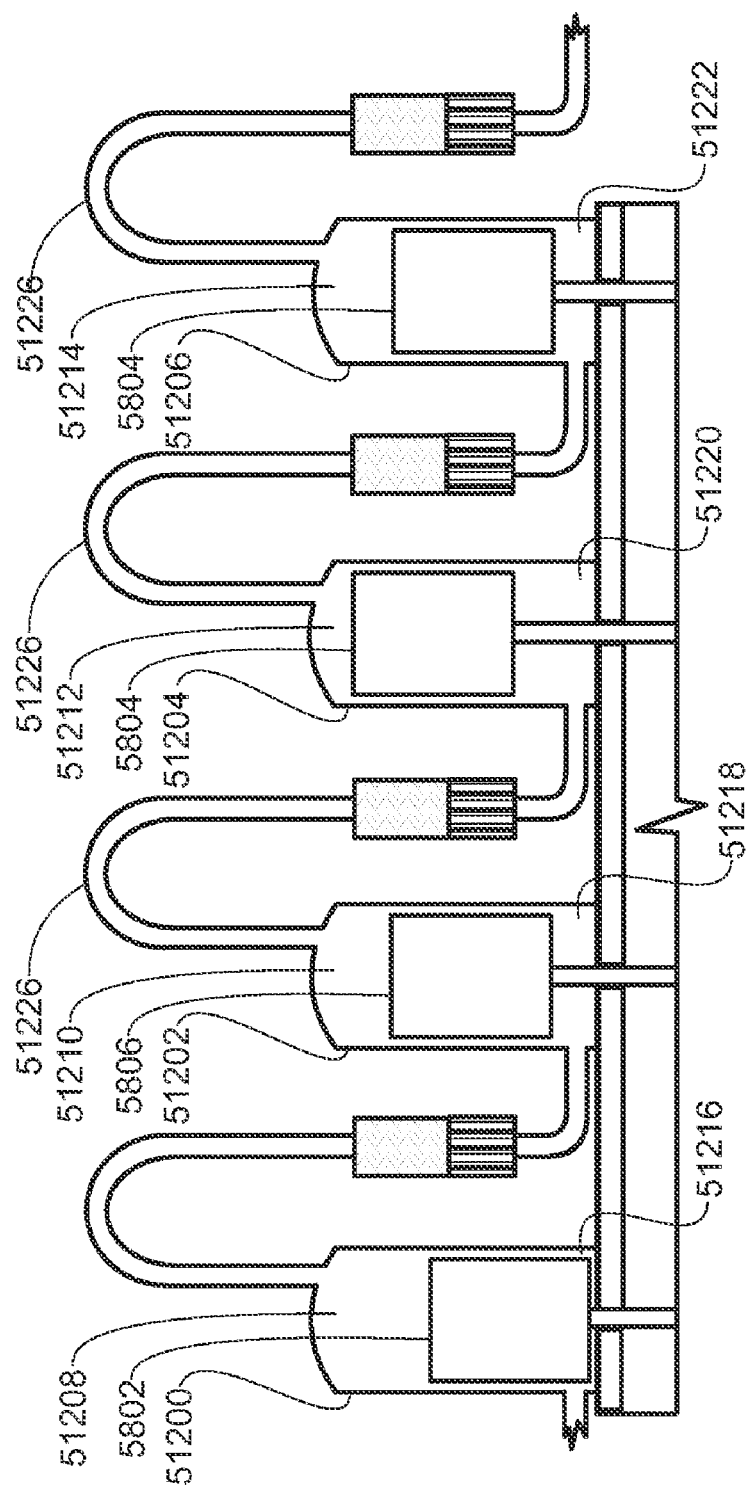


FIG. 512A.

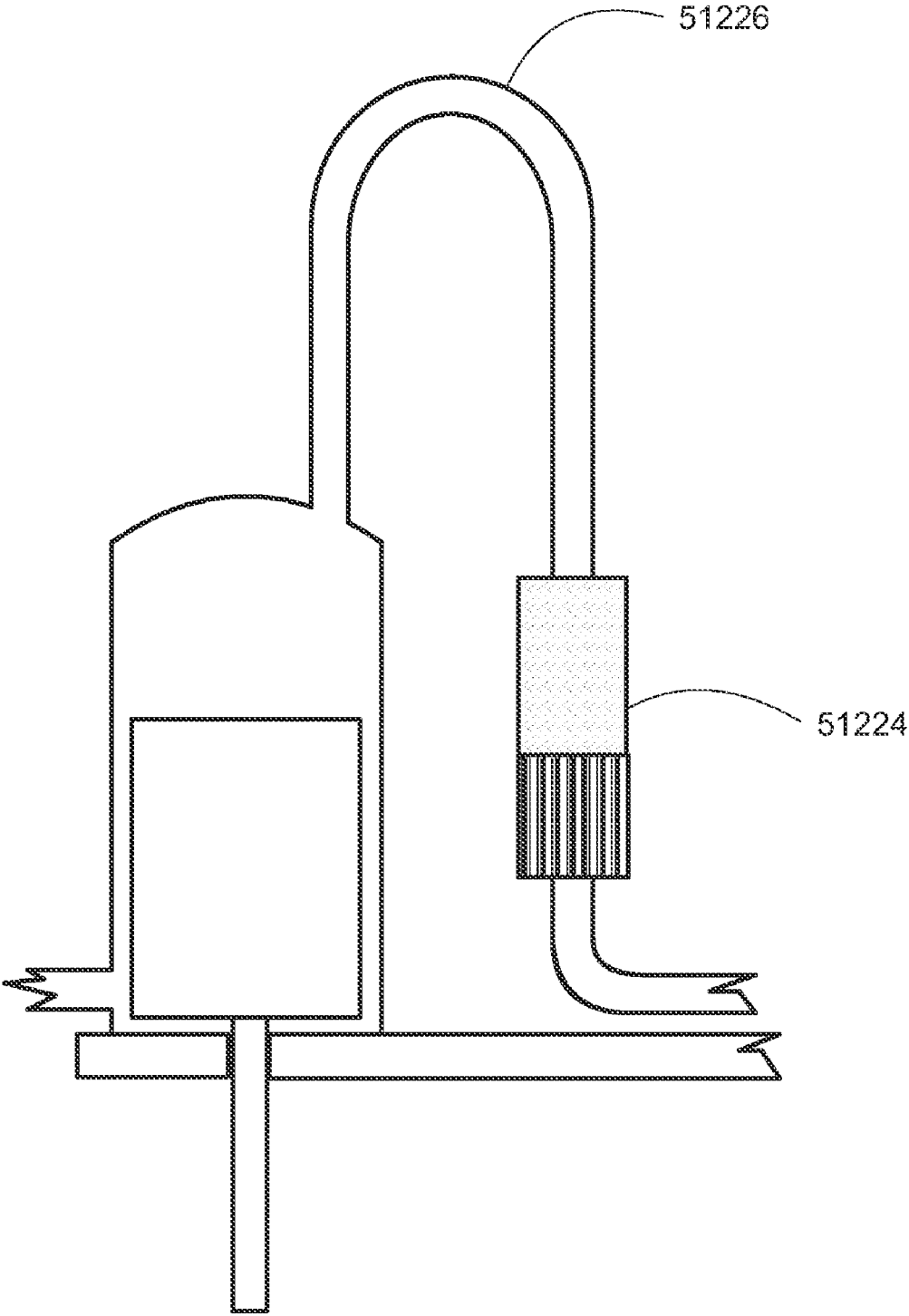


FIG.512B

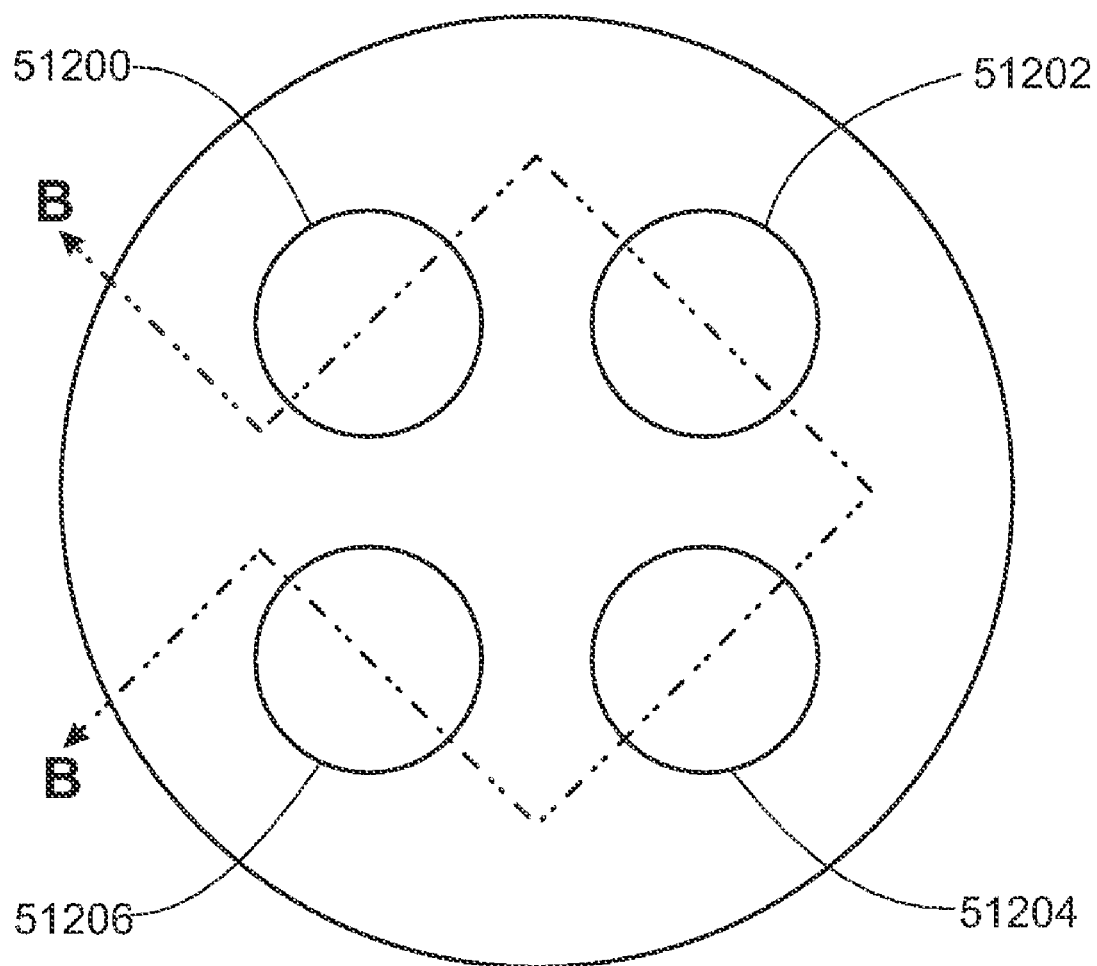


FIG. 512C

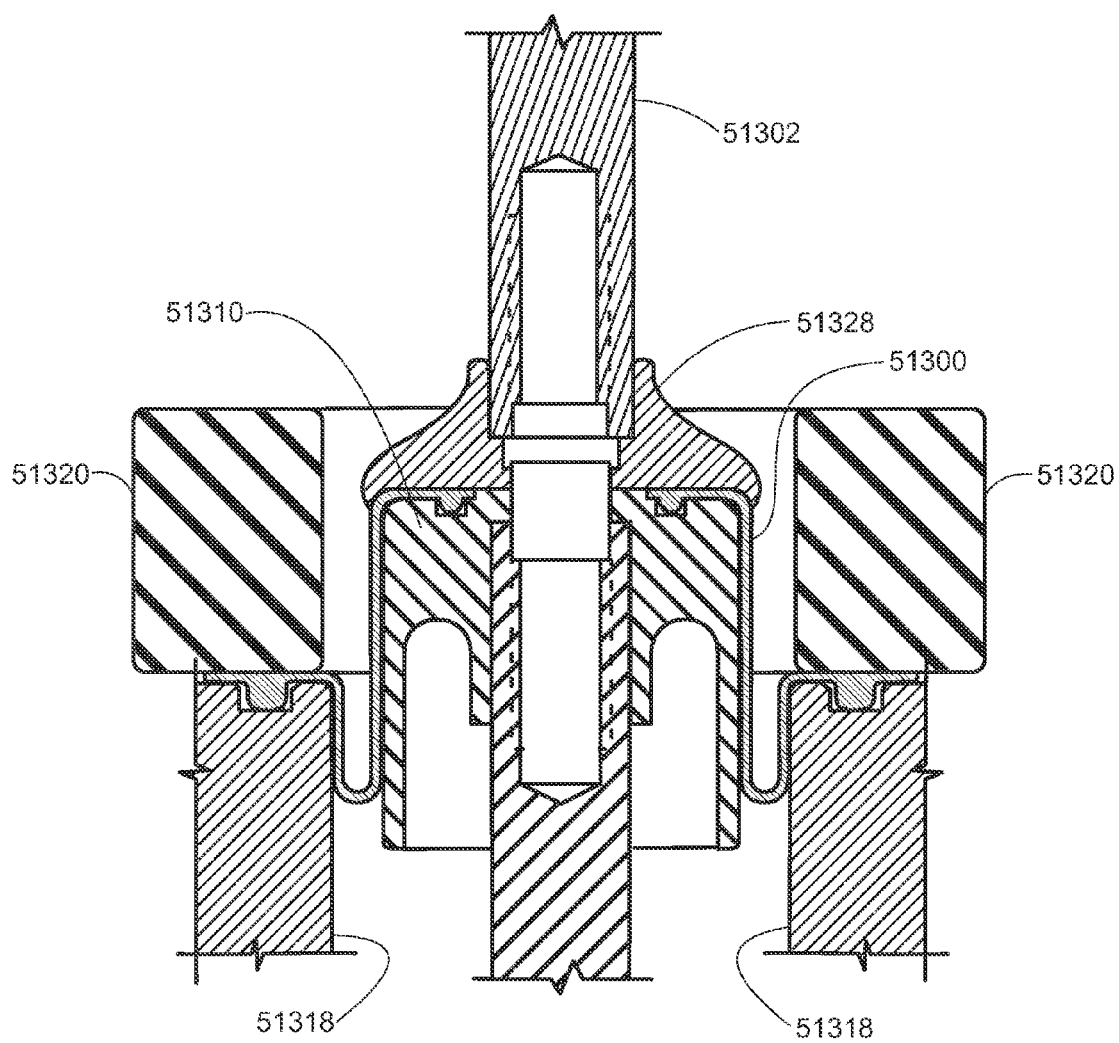


FIG. 513A

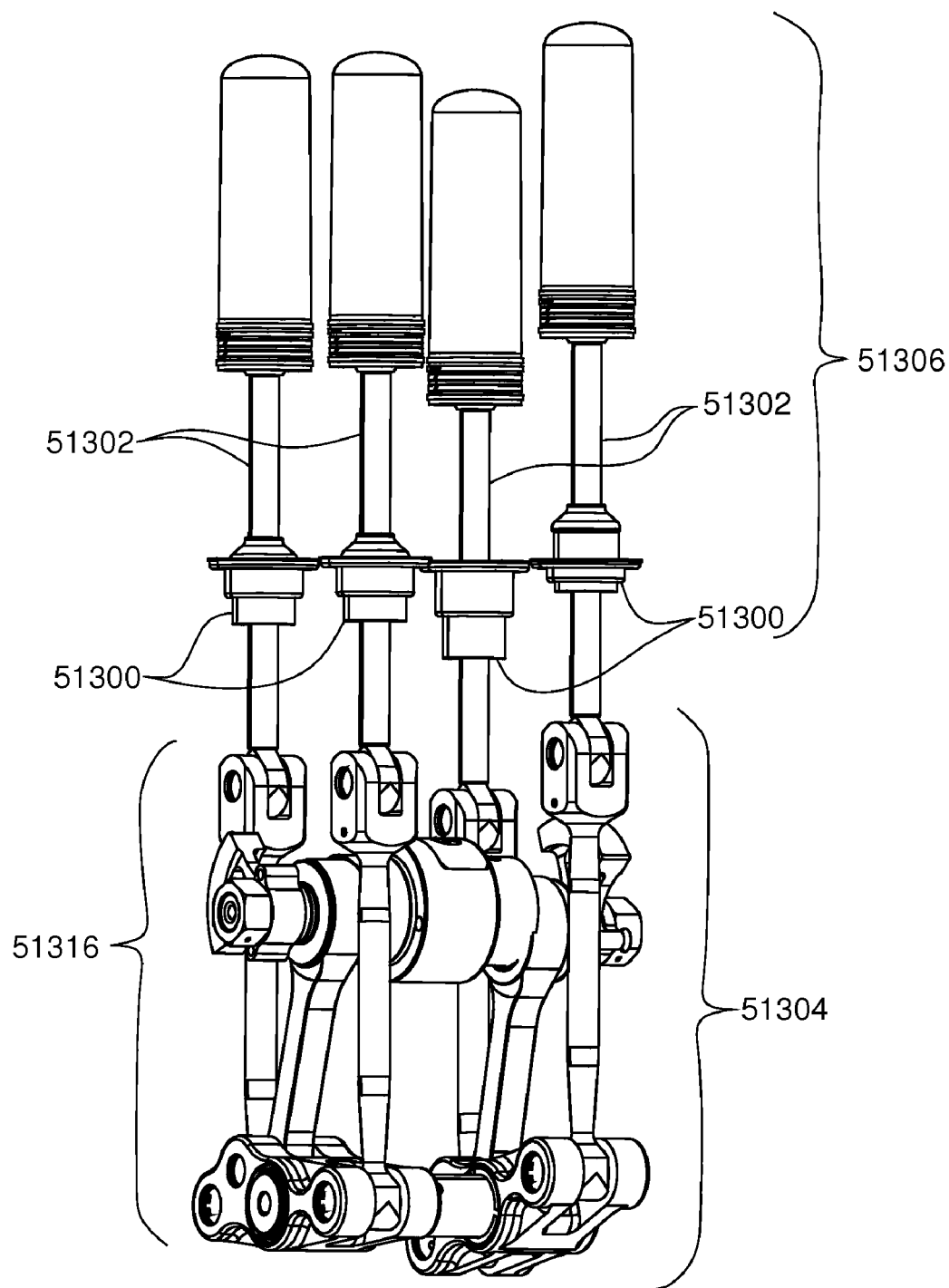


FIG. 513B

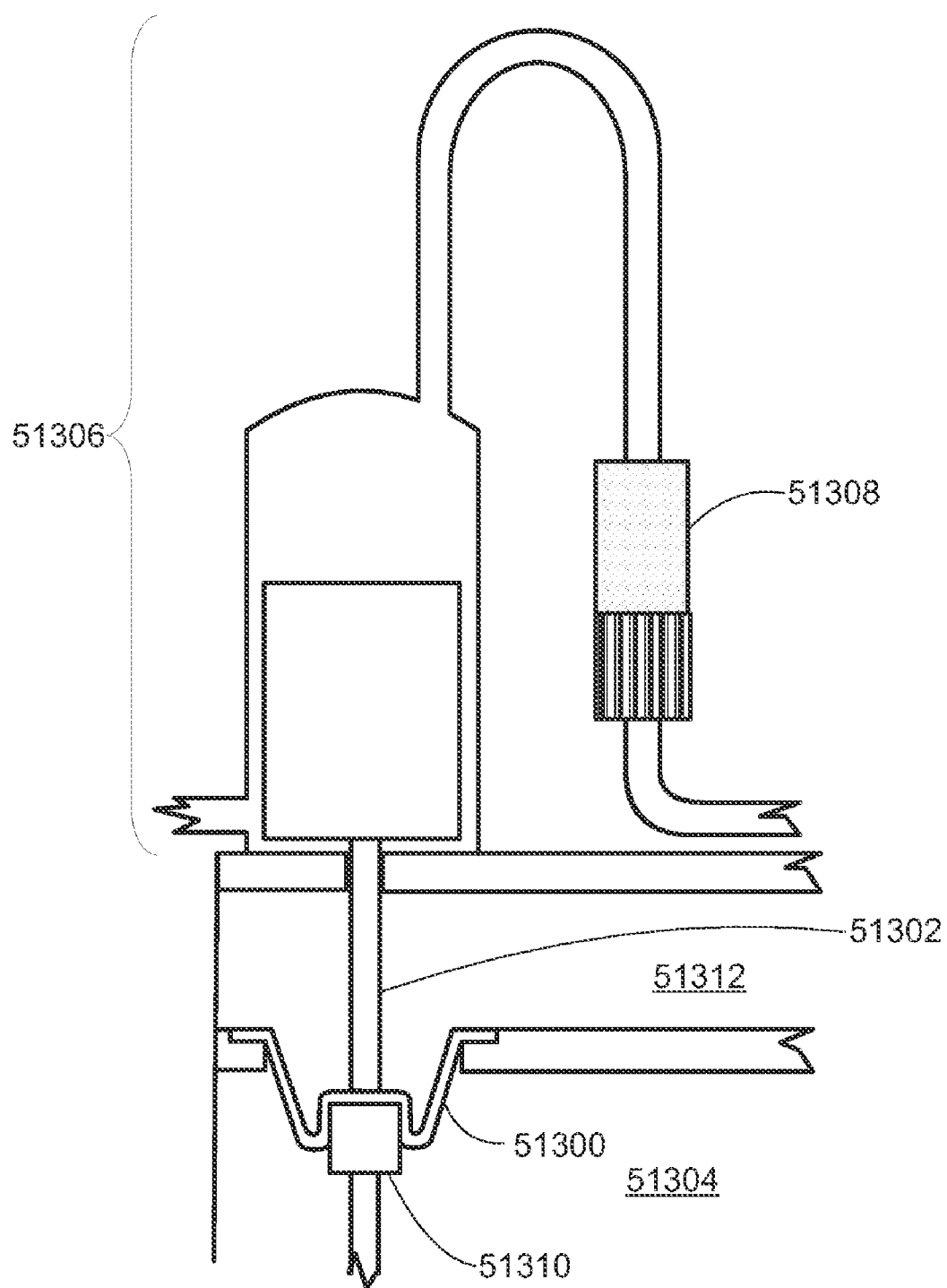


FIG. 513C

51300

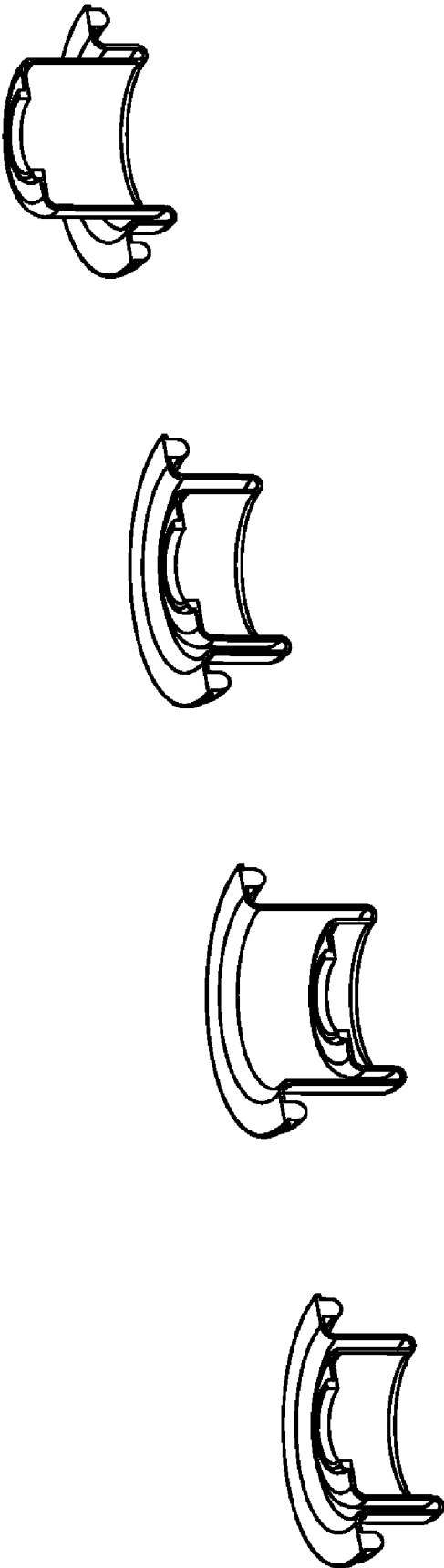


FIG. 513D

51300

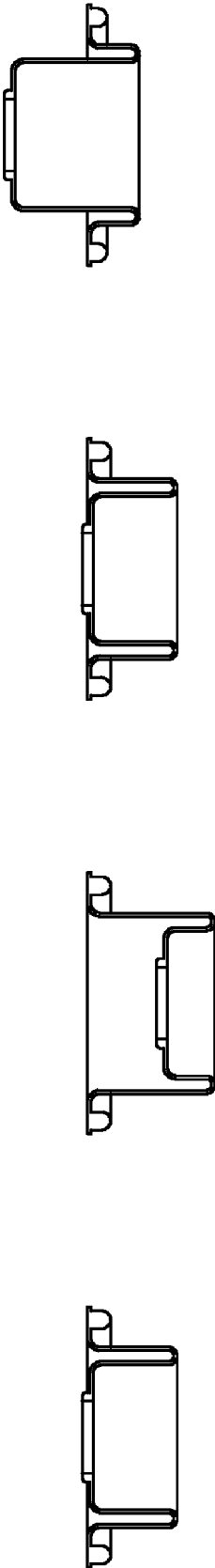


FIG. 513E

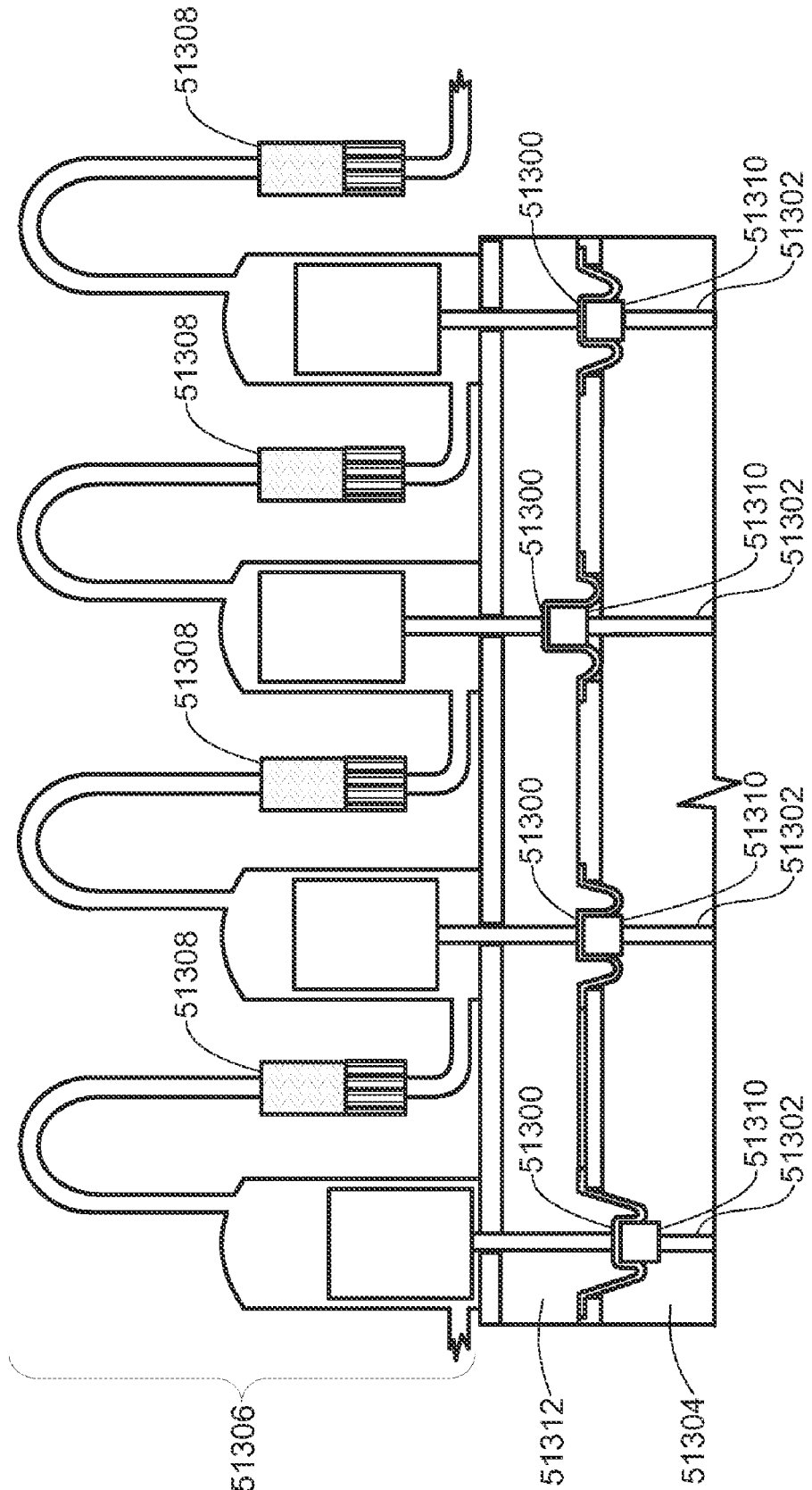


FIG. 513F

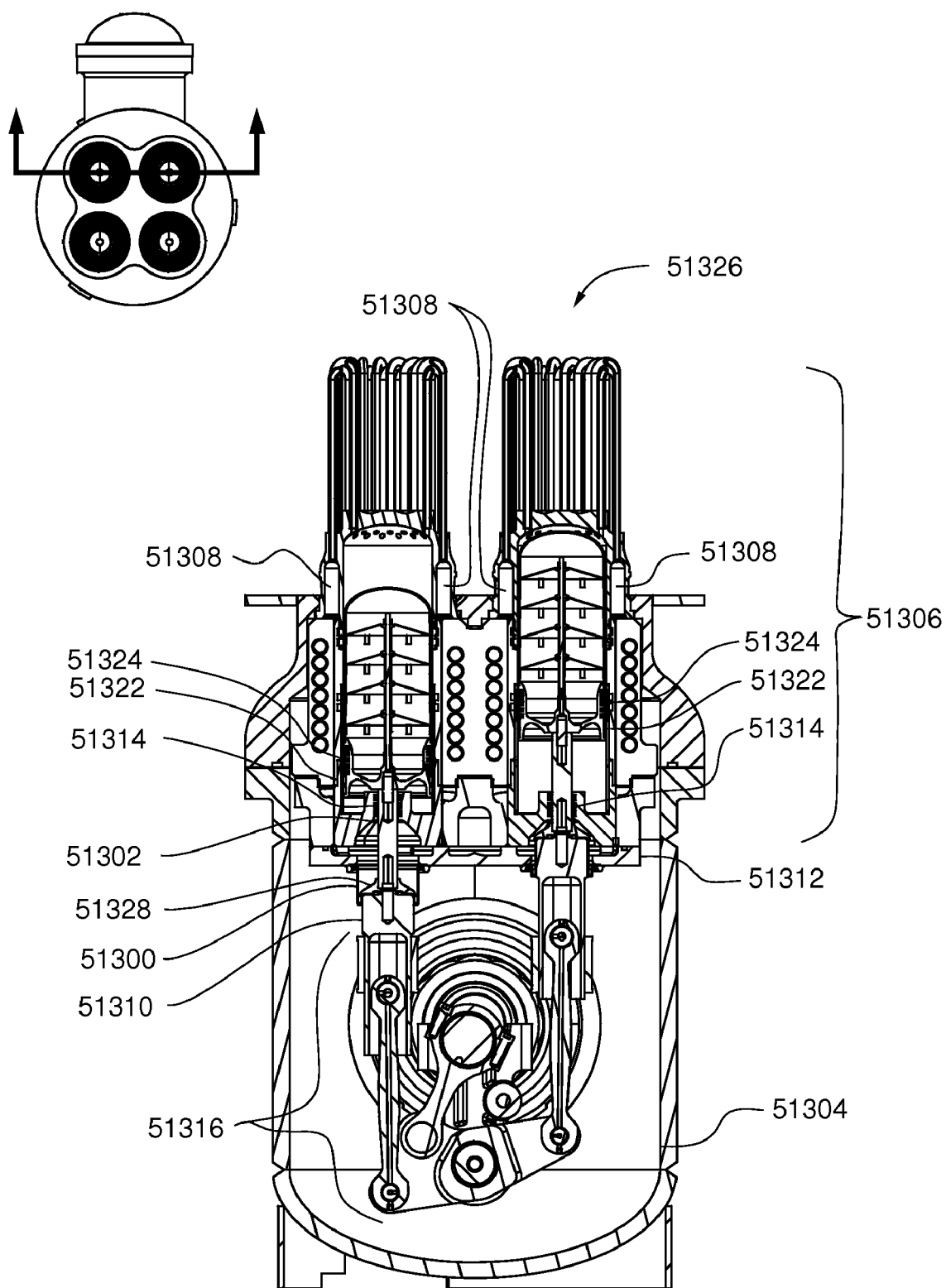


FIG. 513G

FIG. 514A

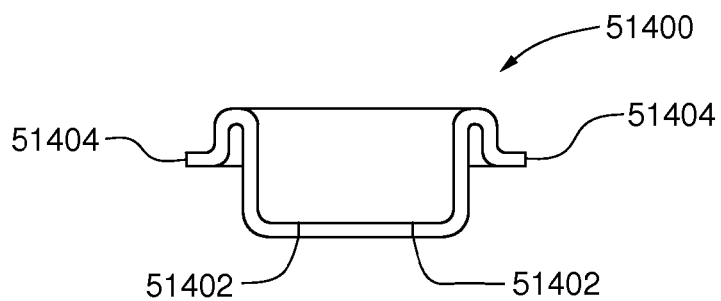


FIG. 514B

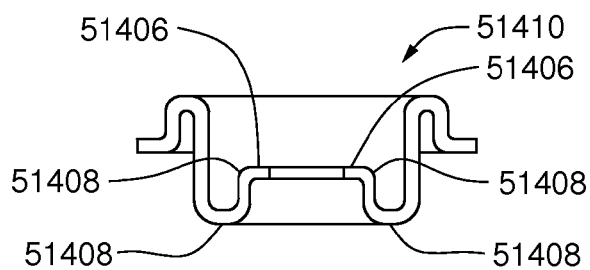


FIG. 514C

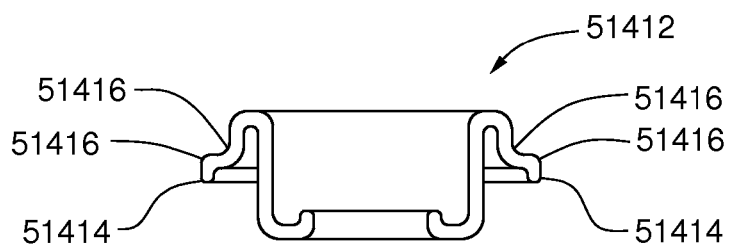


FIG. 514D

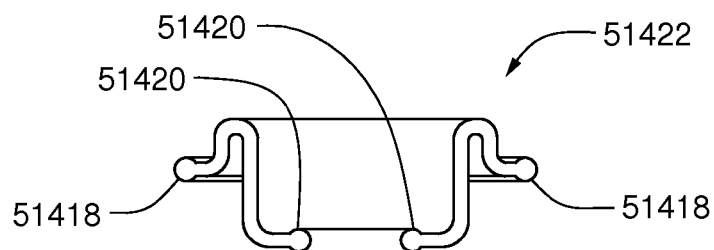
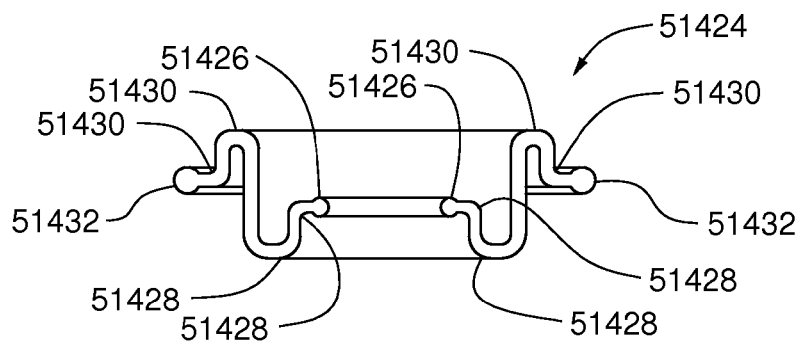


FIG. 514E



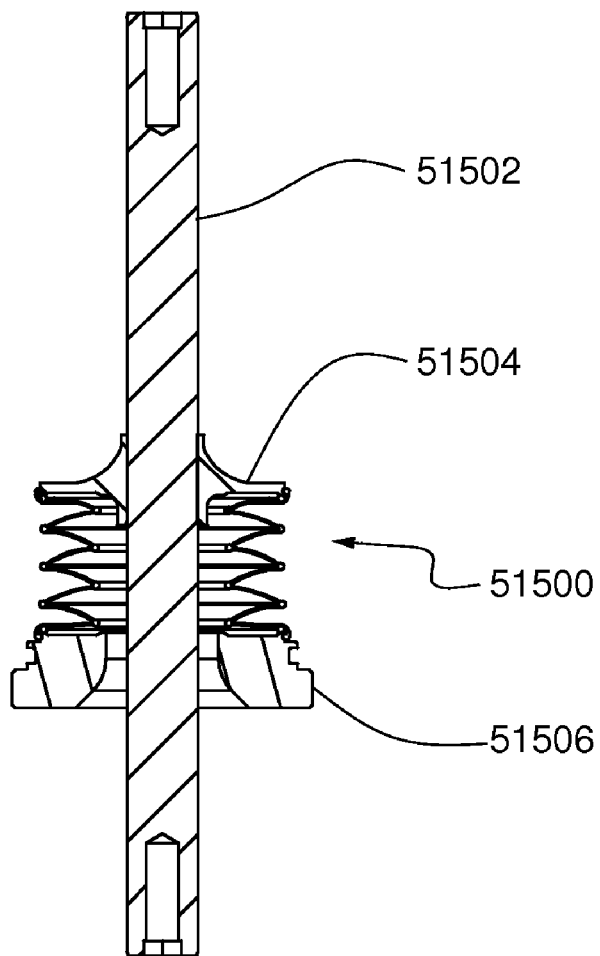
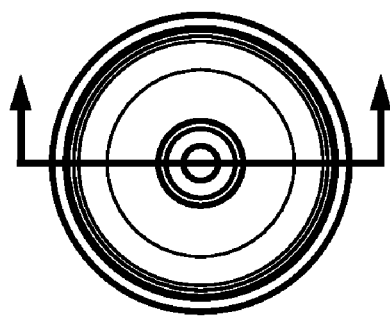


FIG. 515A

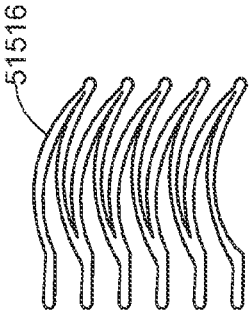


FIG. 515E

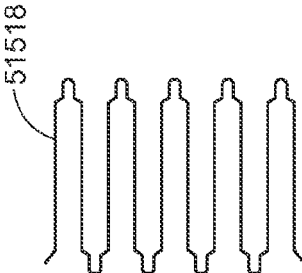


FIG. 515F

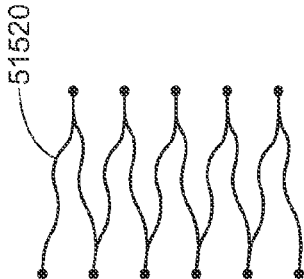


FIG. 515G

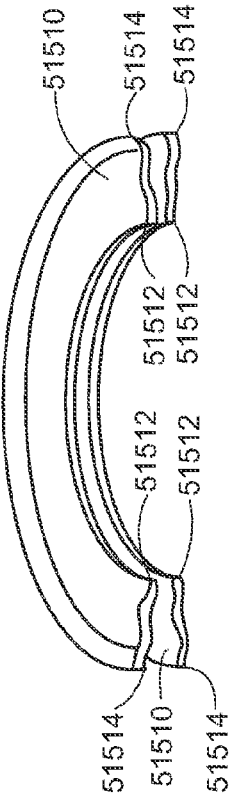


FIG. 515B

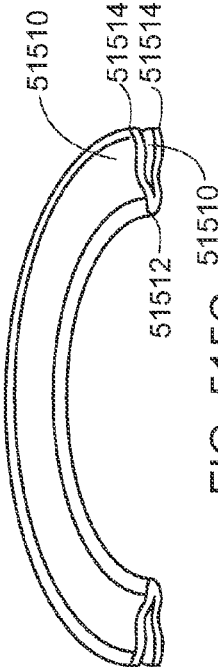


FIG. 515C

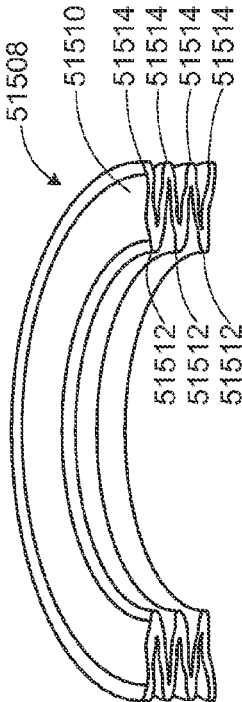


FIG. 515D

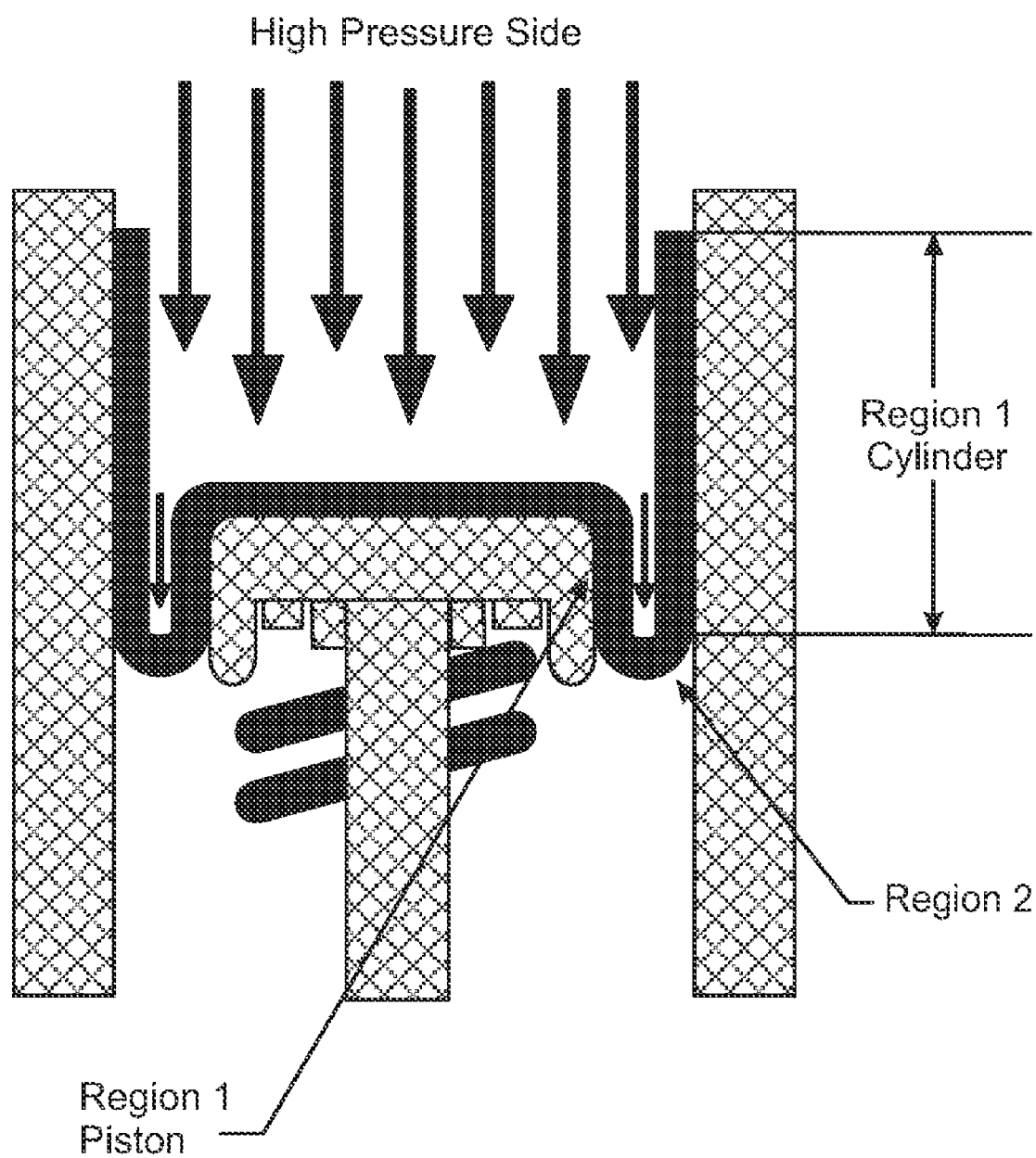


FIG. 515H

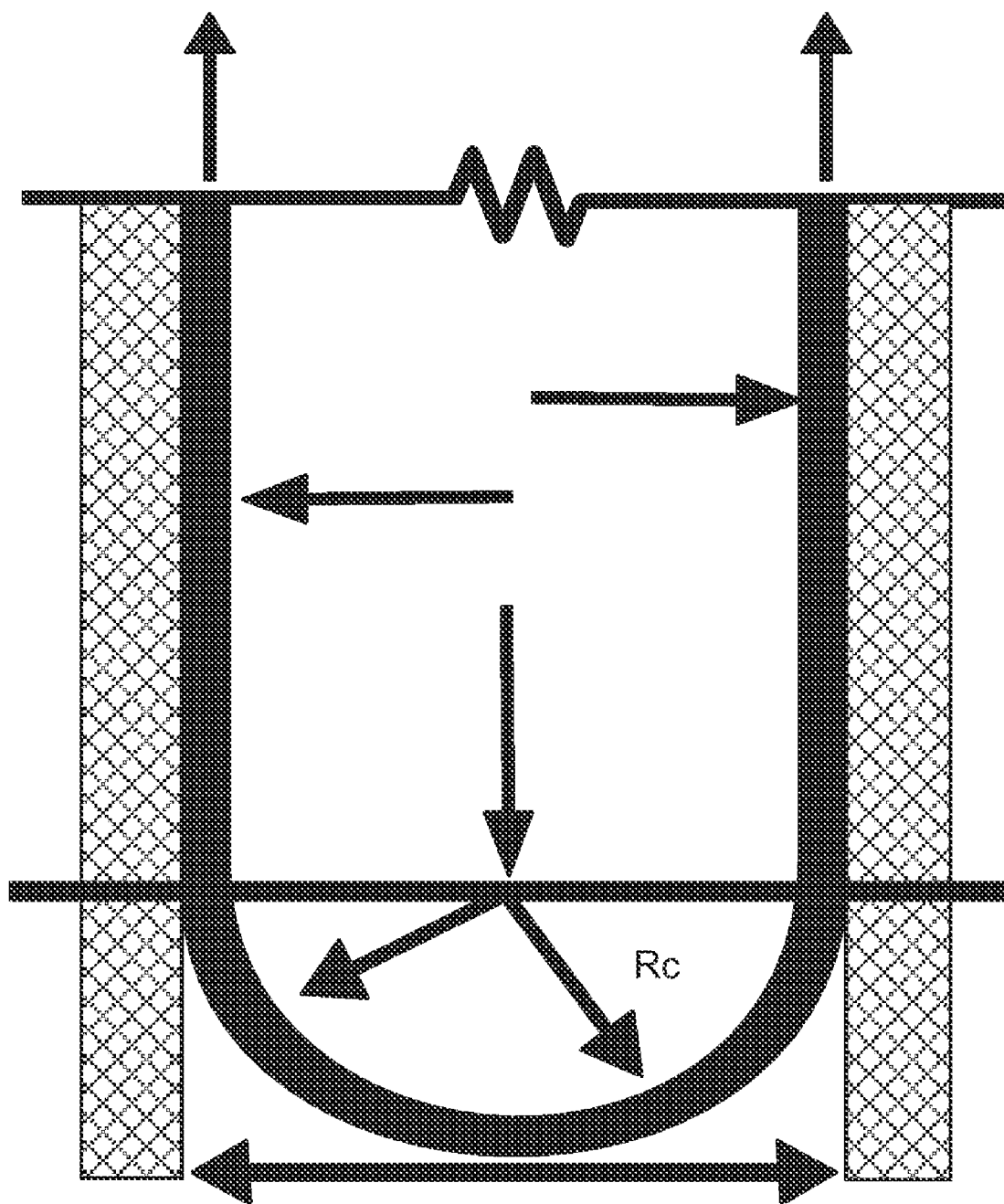


FIG.515I

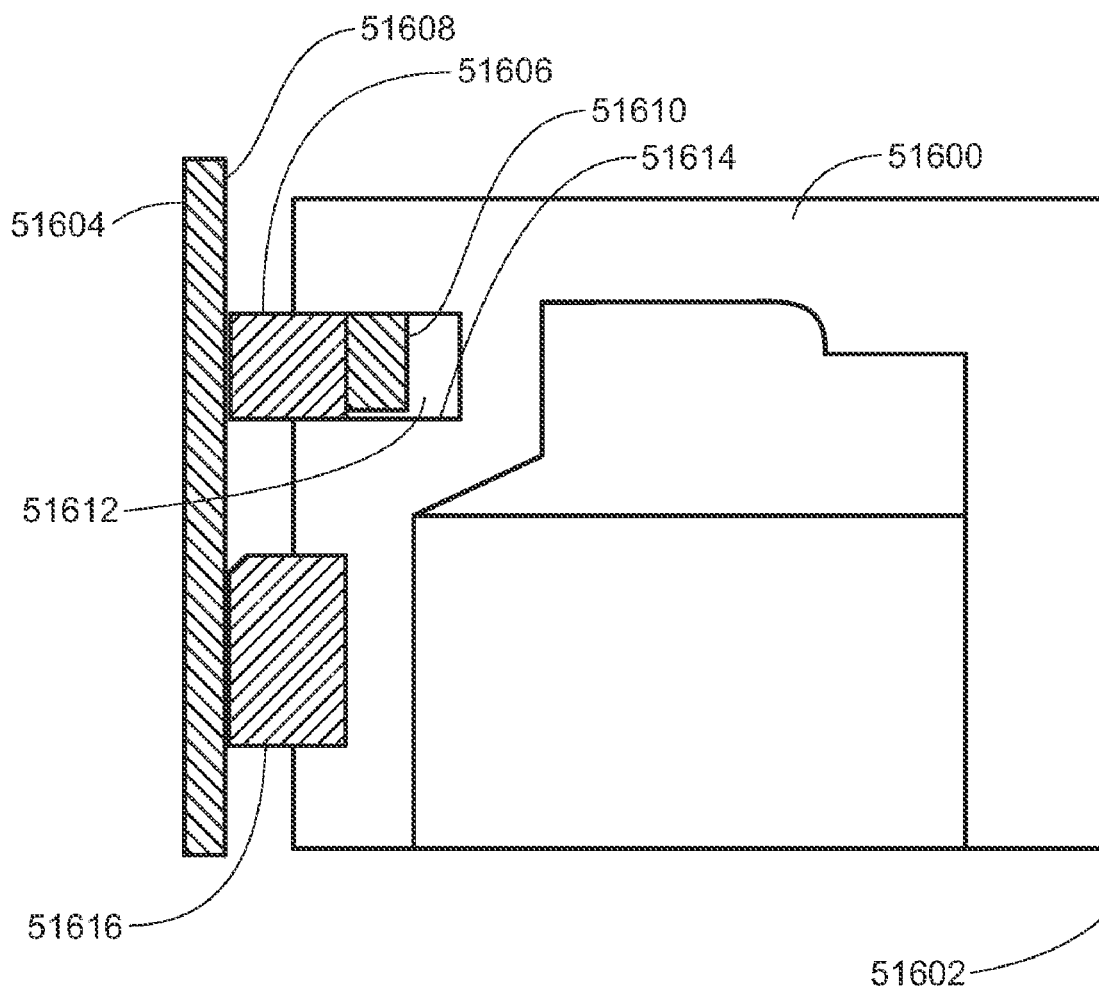


FIG. 516

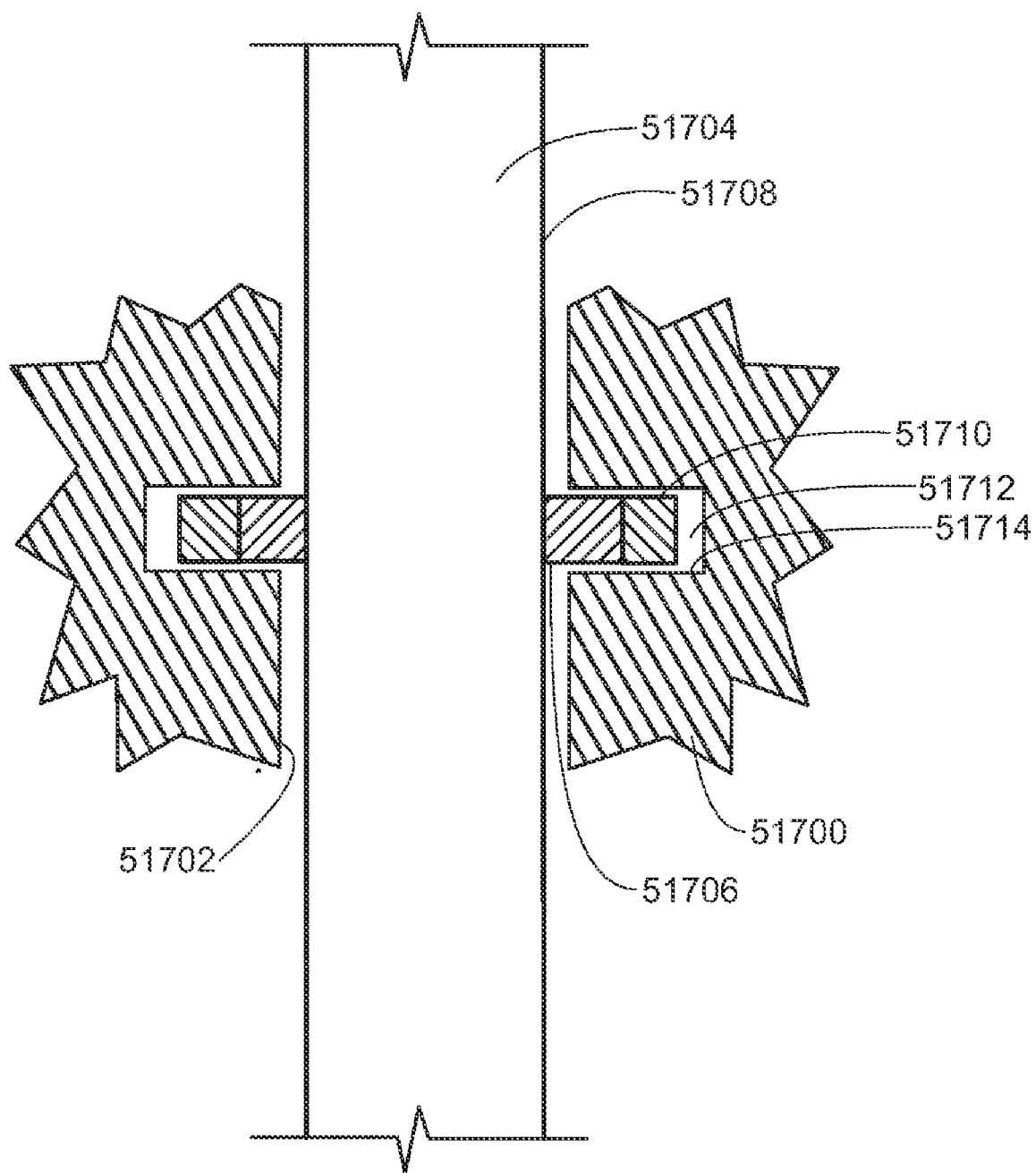


FIG. 517

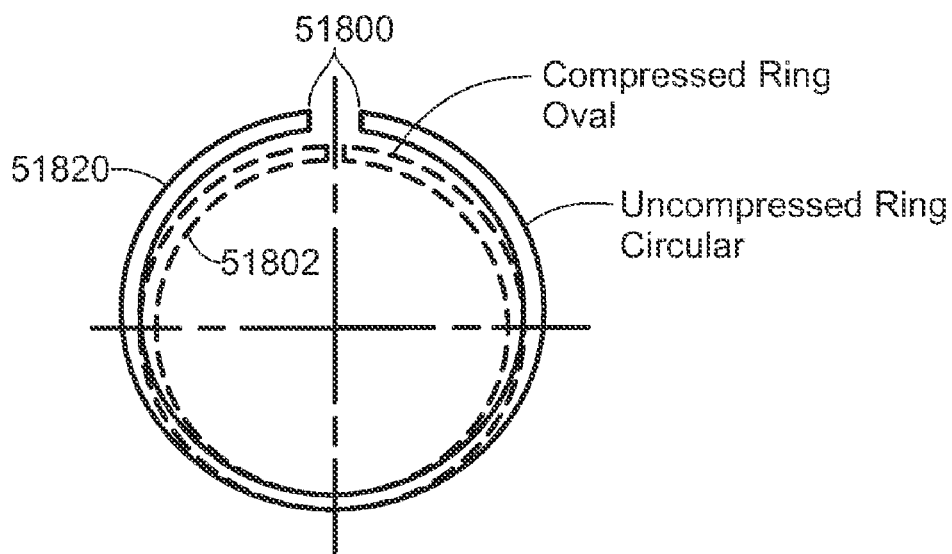


FIG. 518A

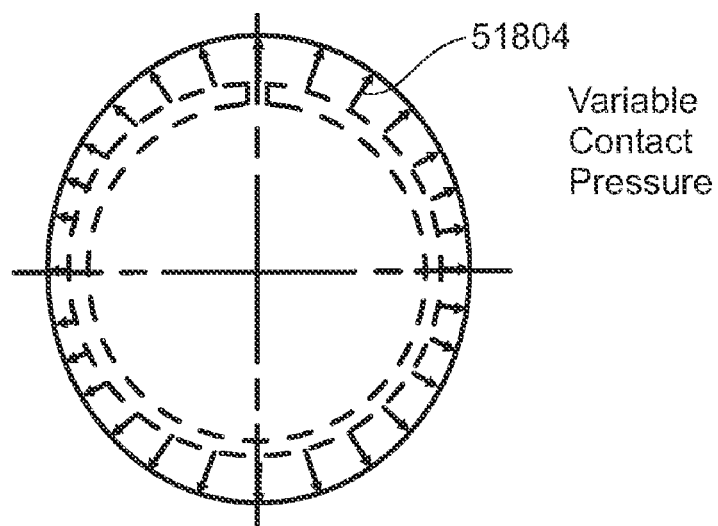


FIG. 518B

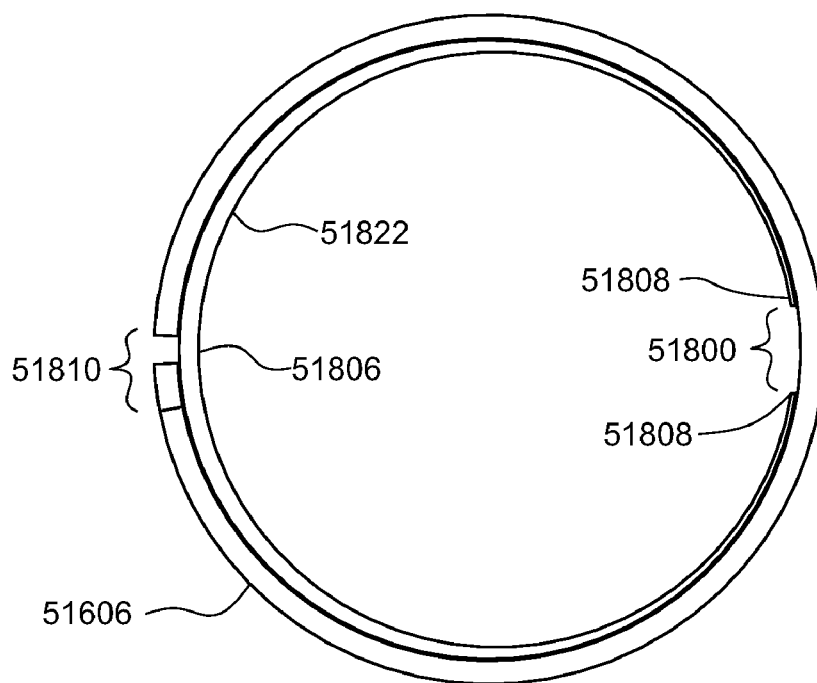


FIG. 518C

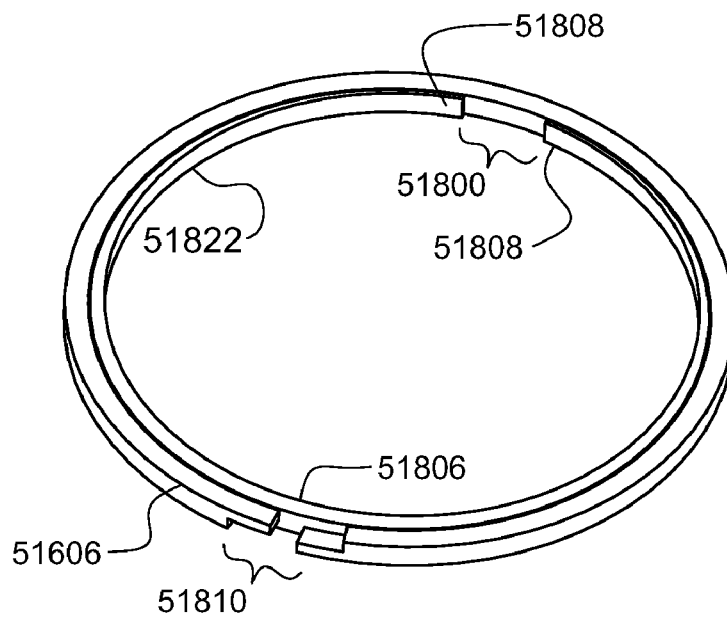


FIG. 518D

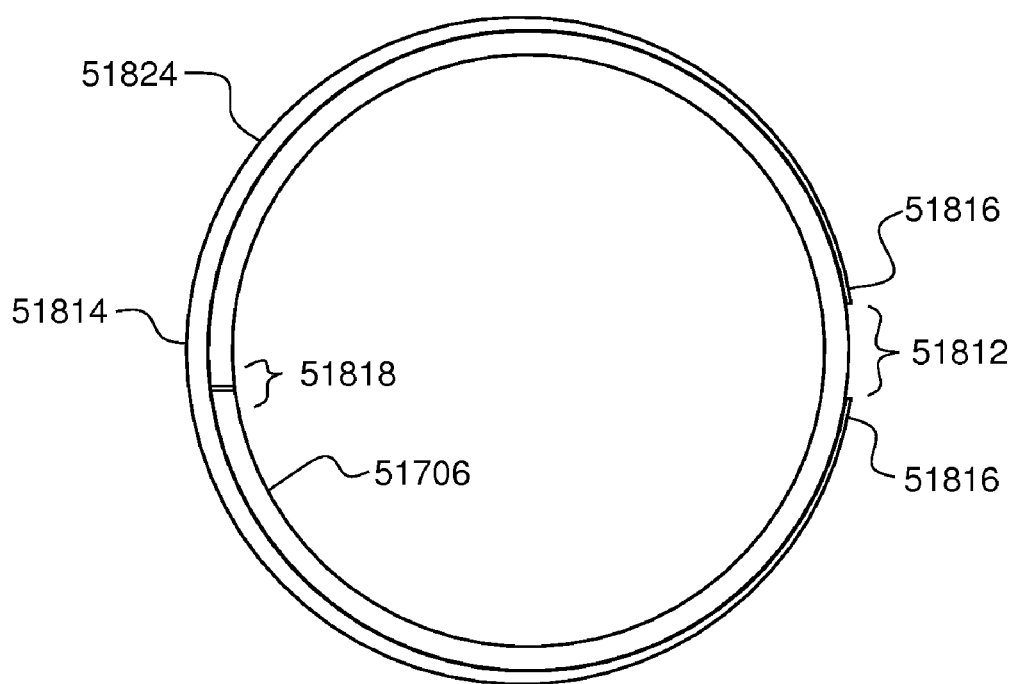


FIG. 518E

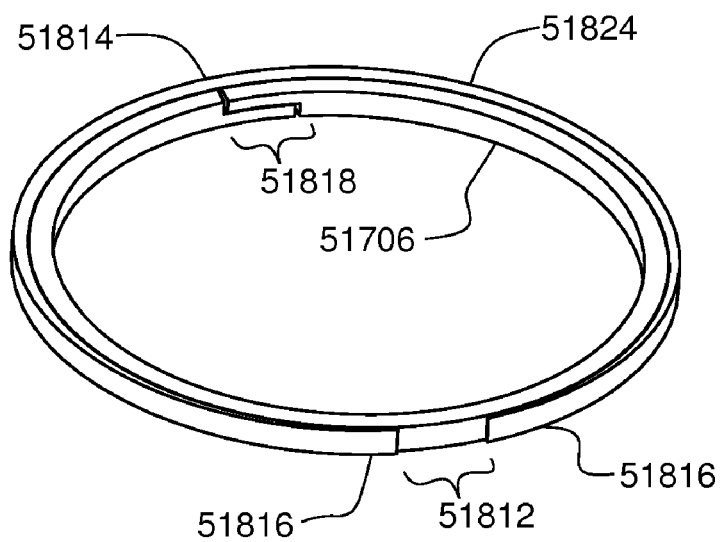


FIG. 518F

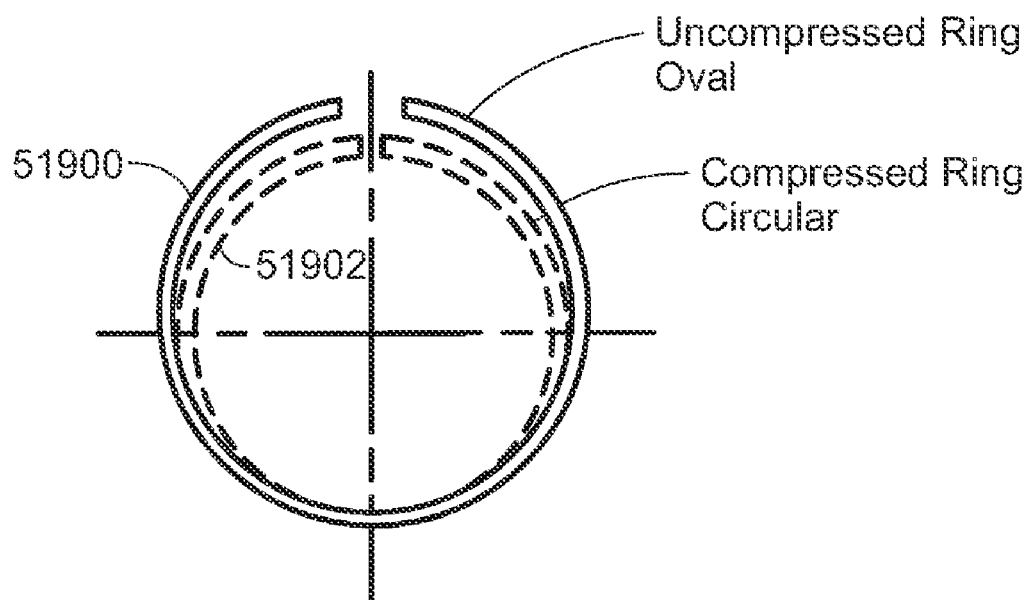


FIG. 519A

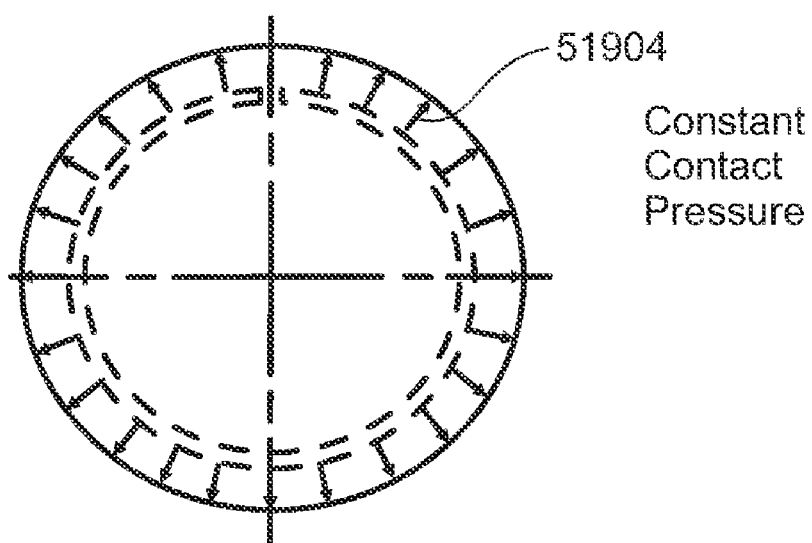


FIG. 519B

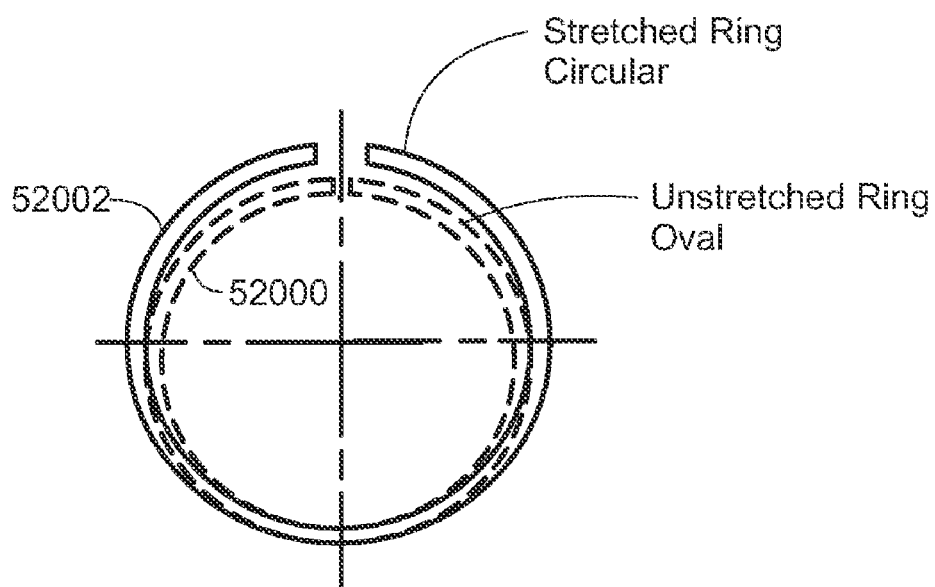


FIG. 520A

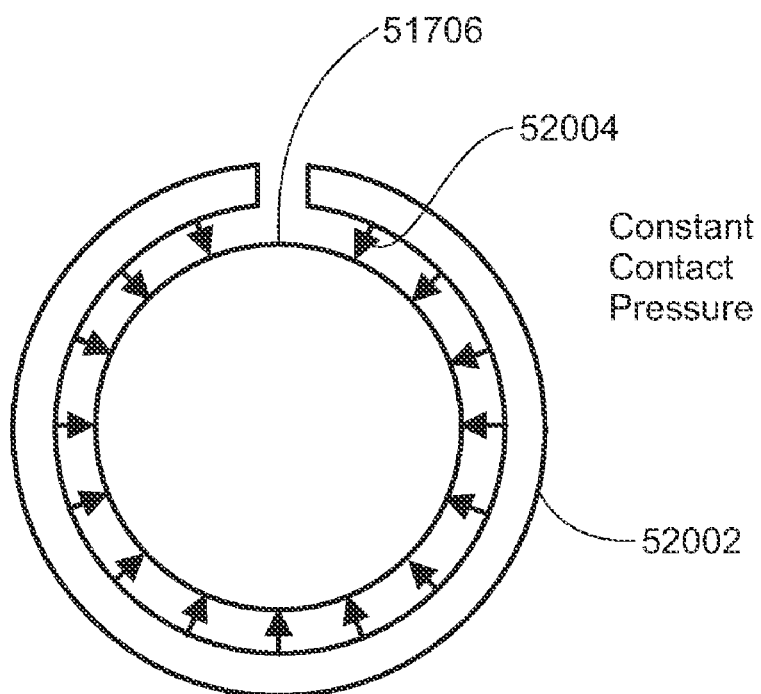


FIG. 520B

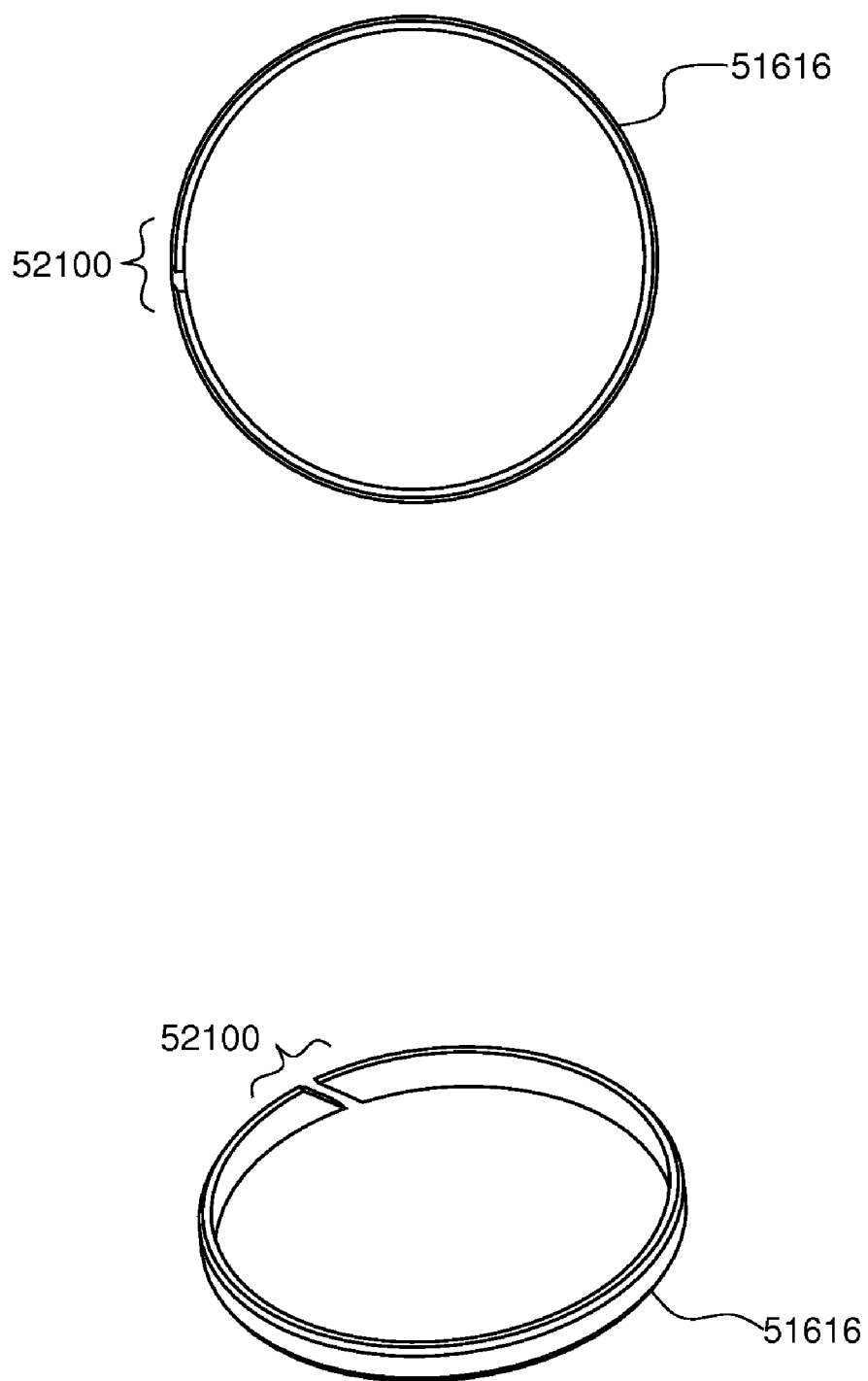


FIG. 521

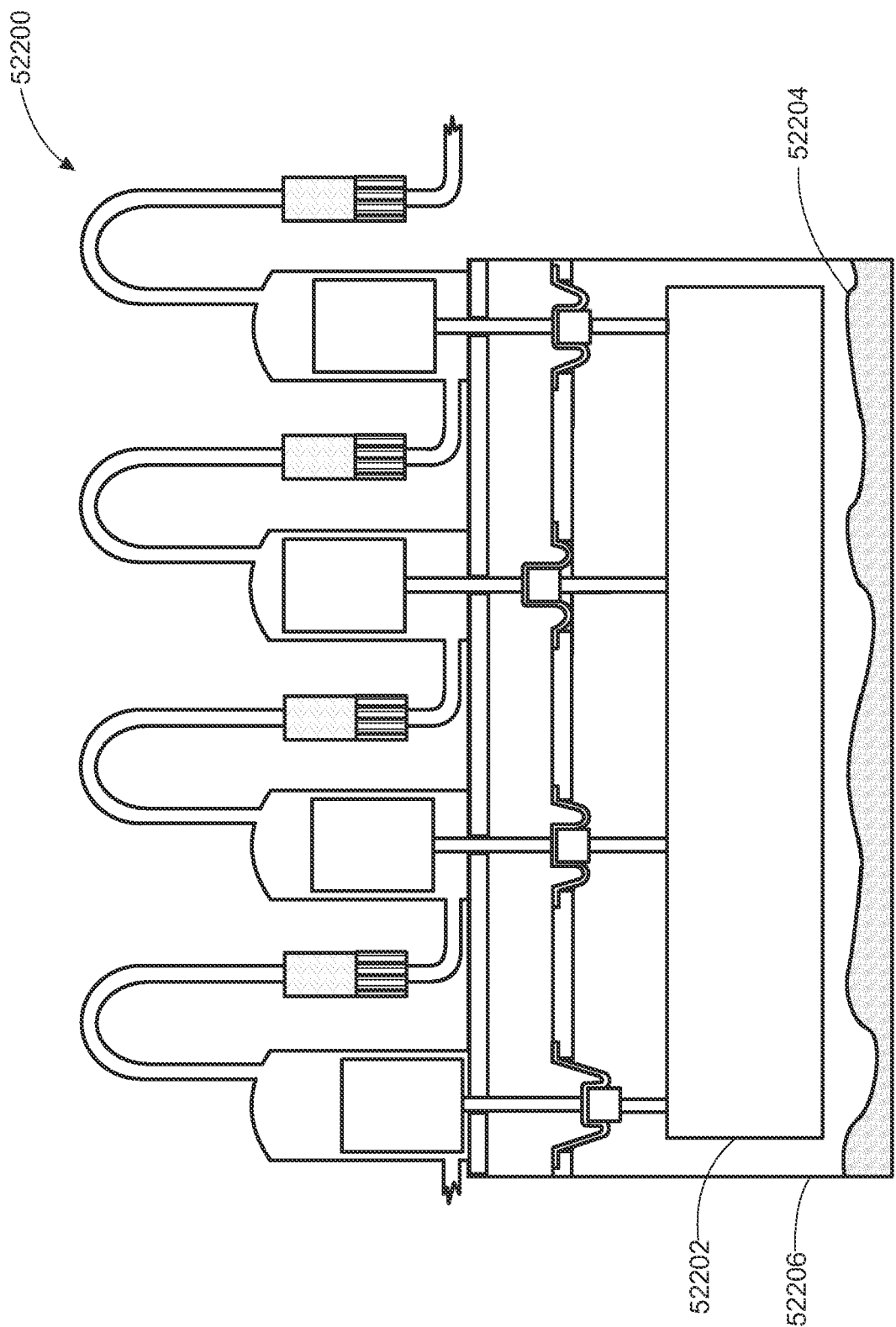


FIG. 522

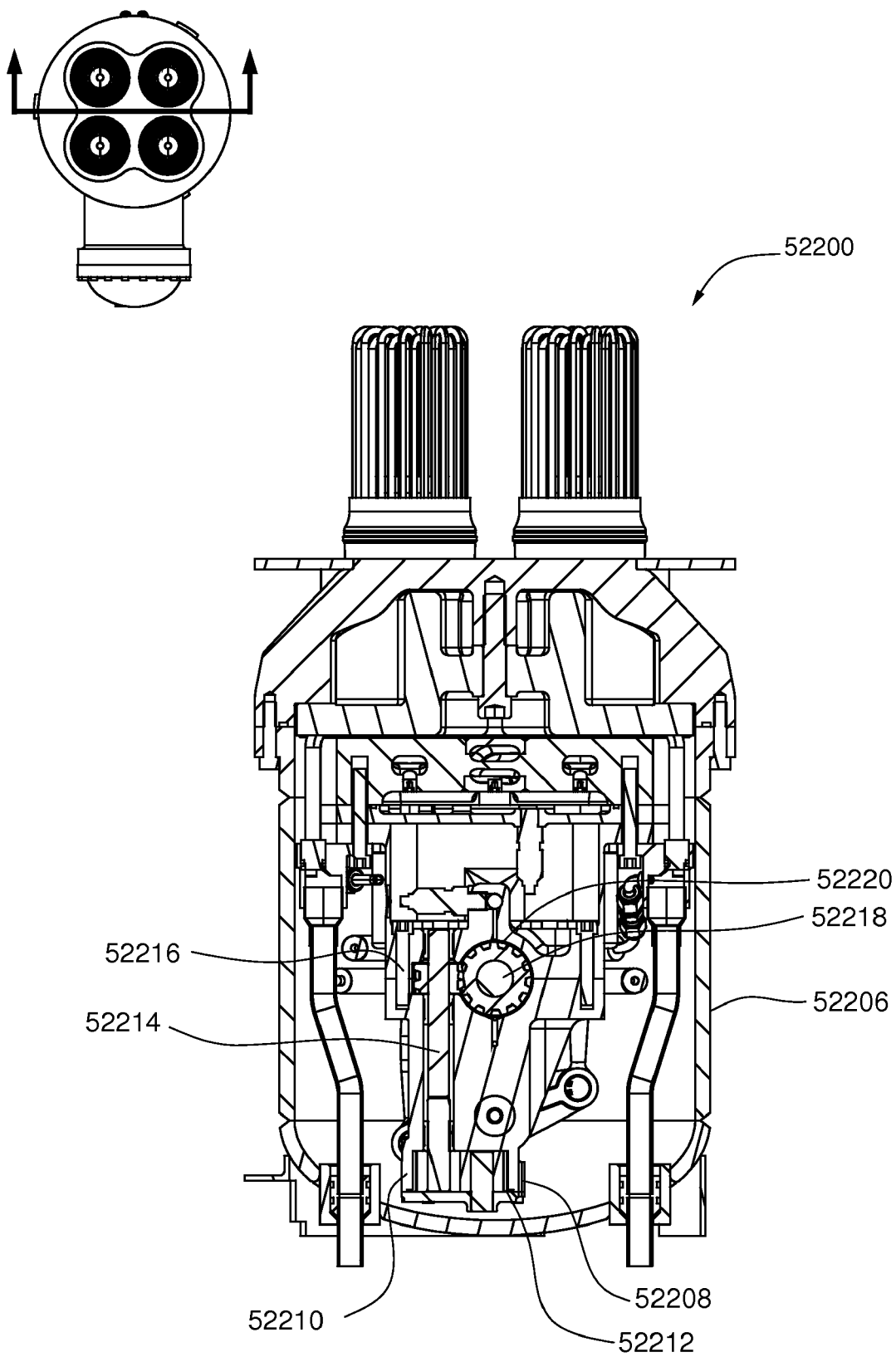


FIG. 523A

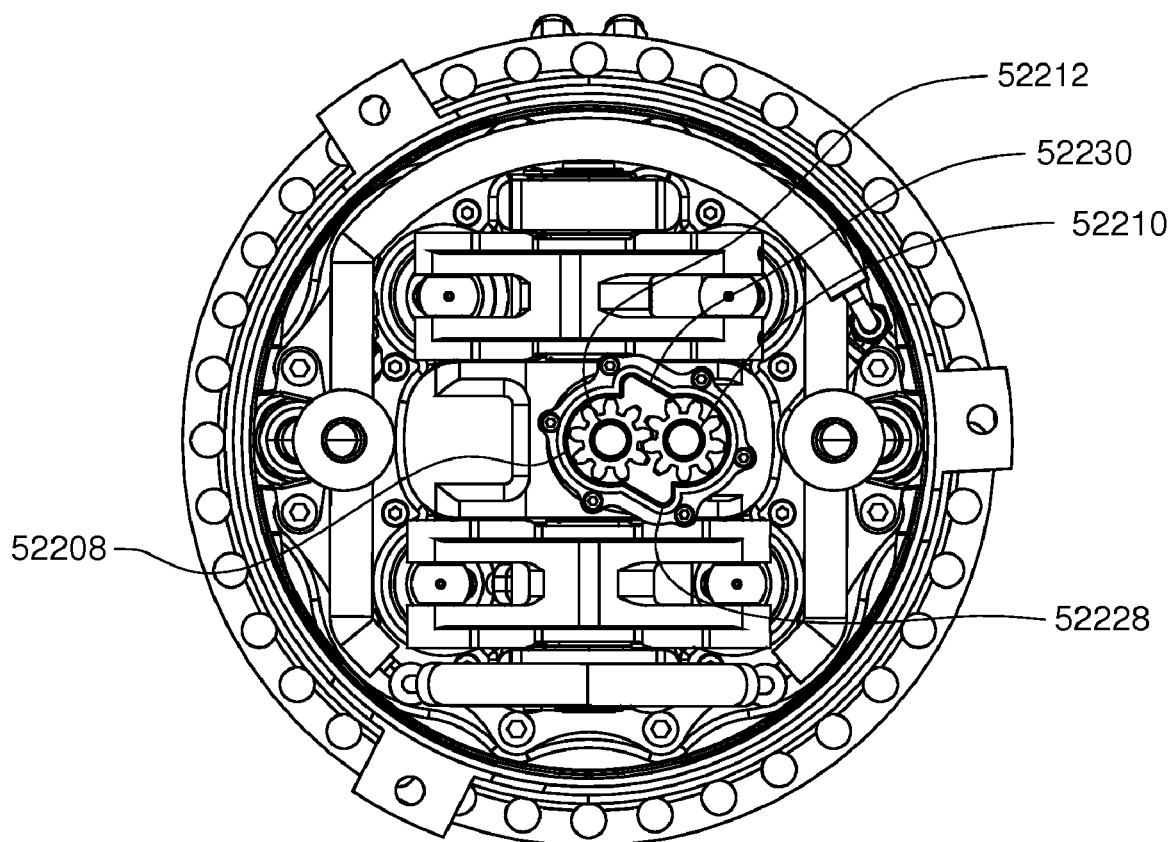


FIG. 523B

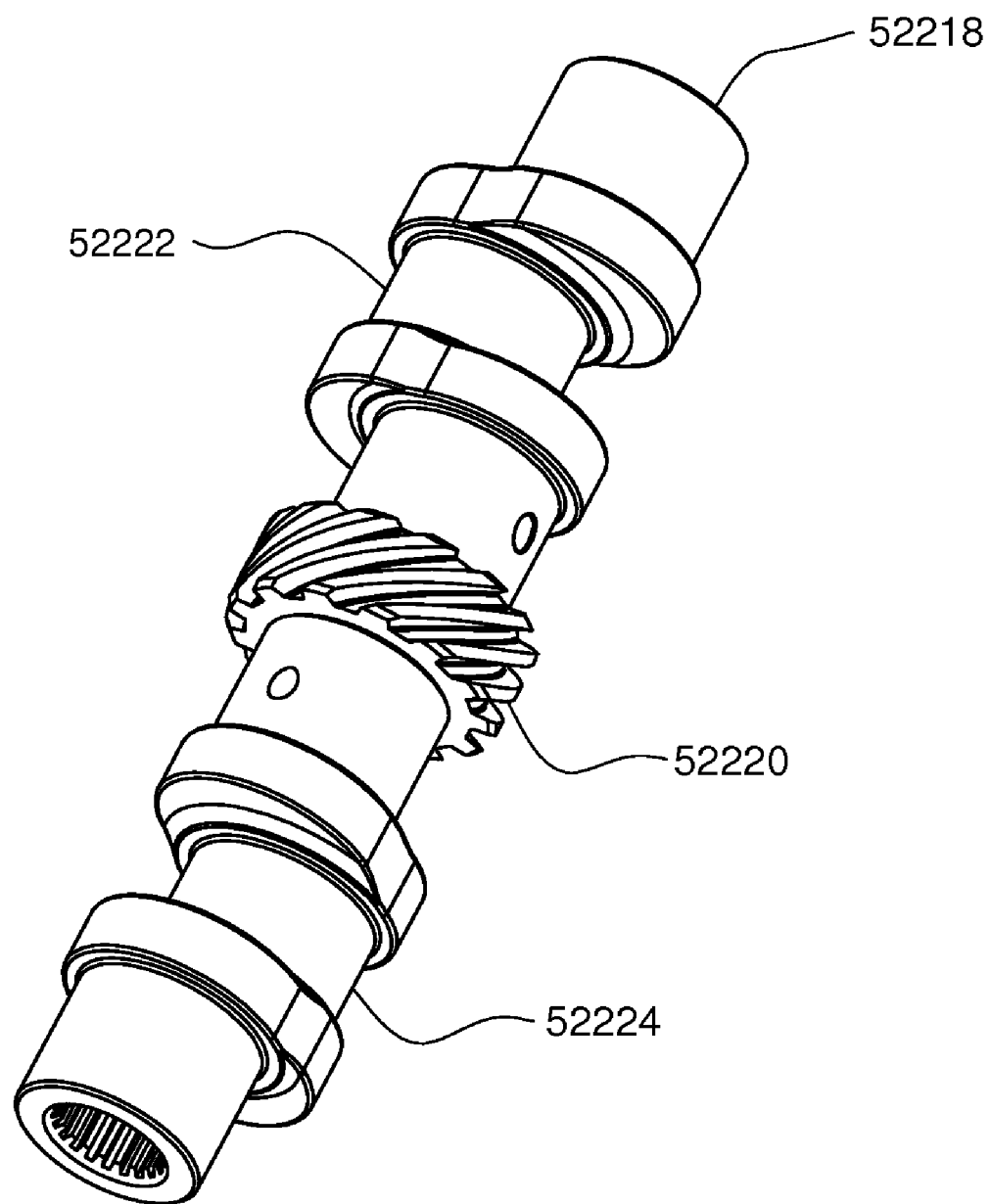
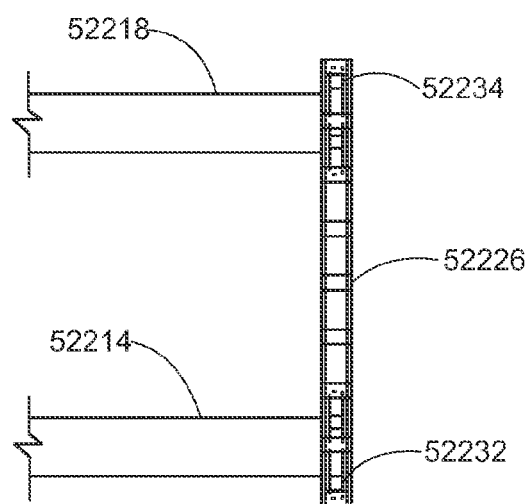
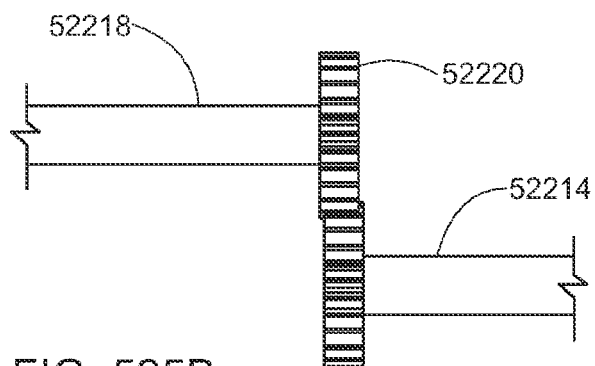
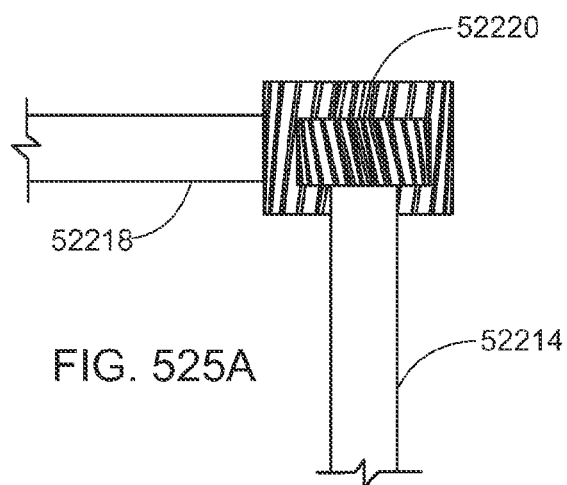


FIG. 524



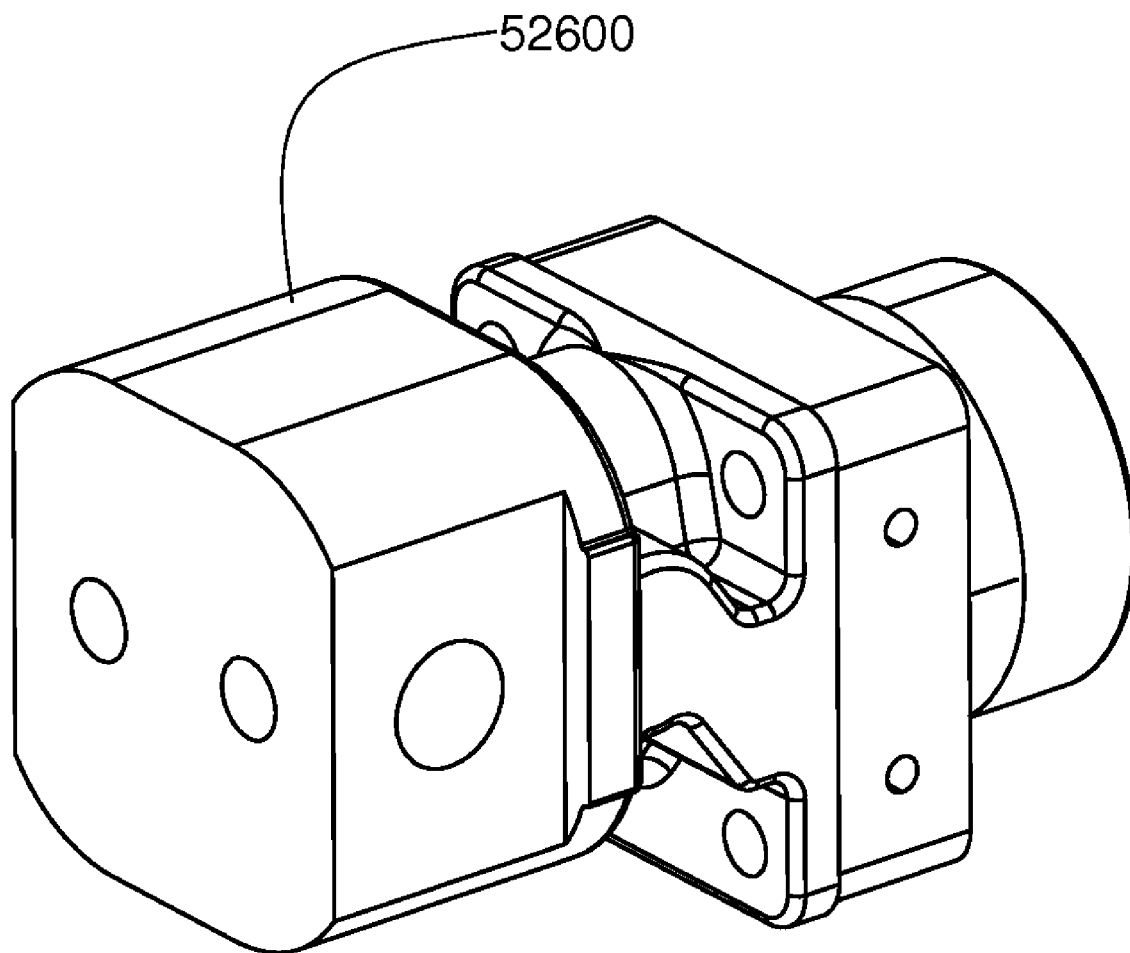


FIG. 526A

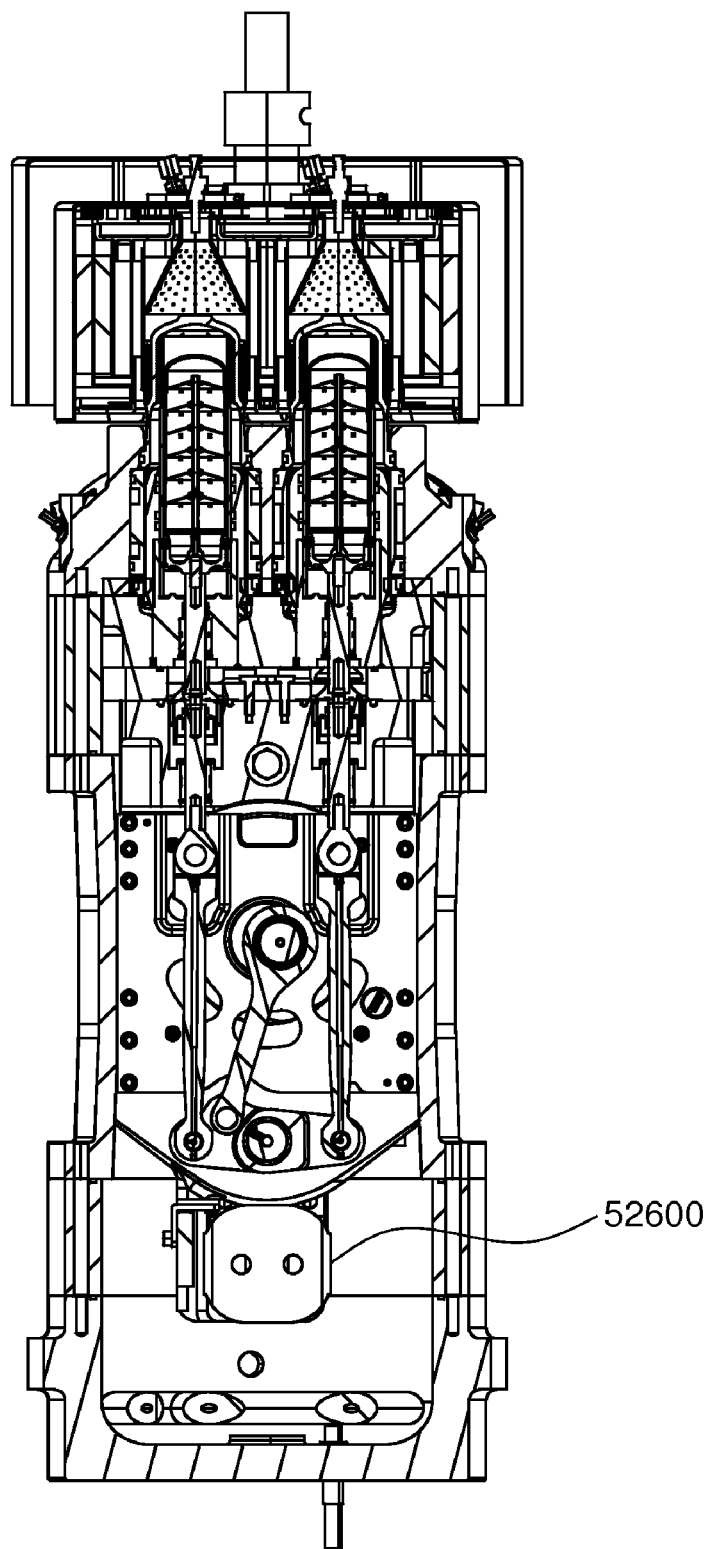


FIG. 526B

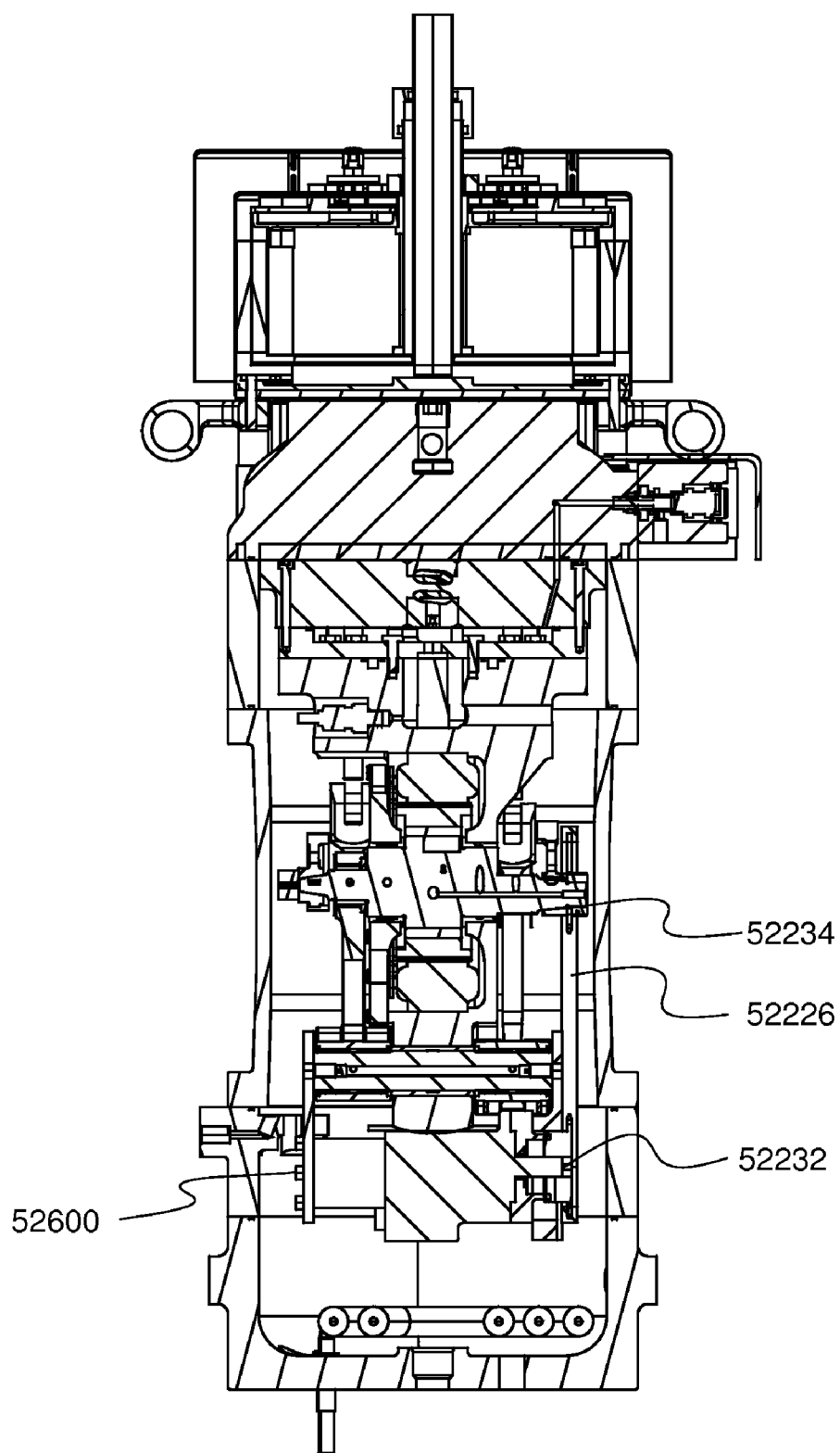


FIG. 526C

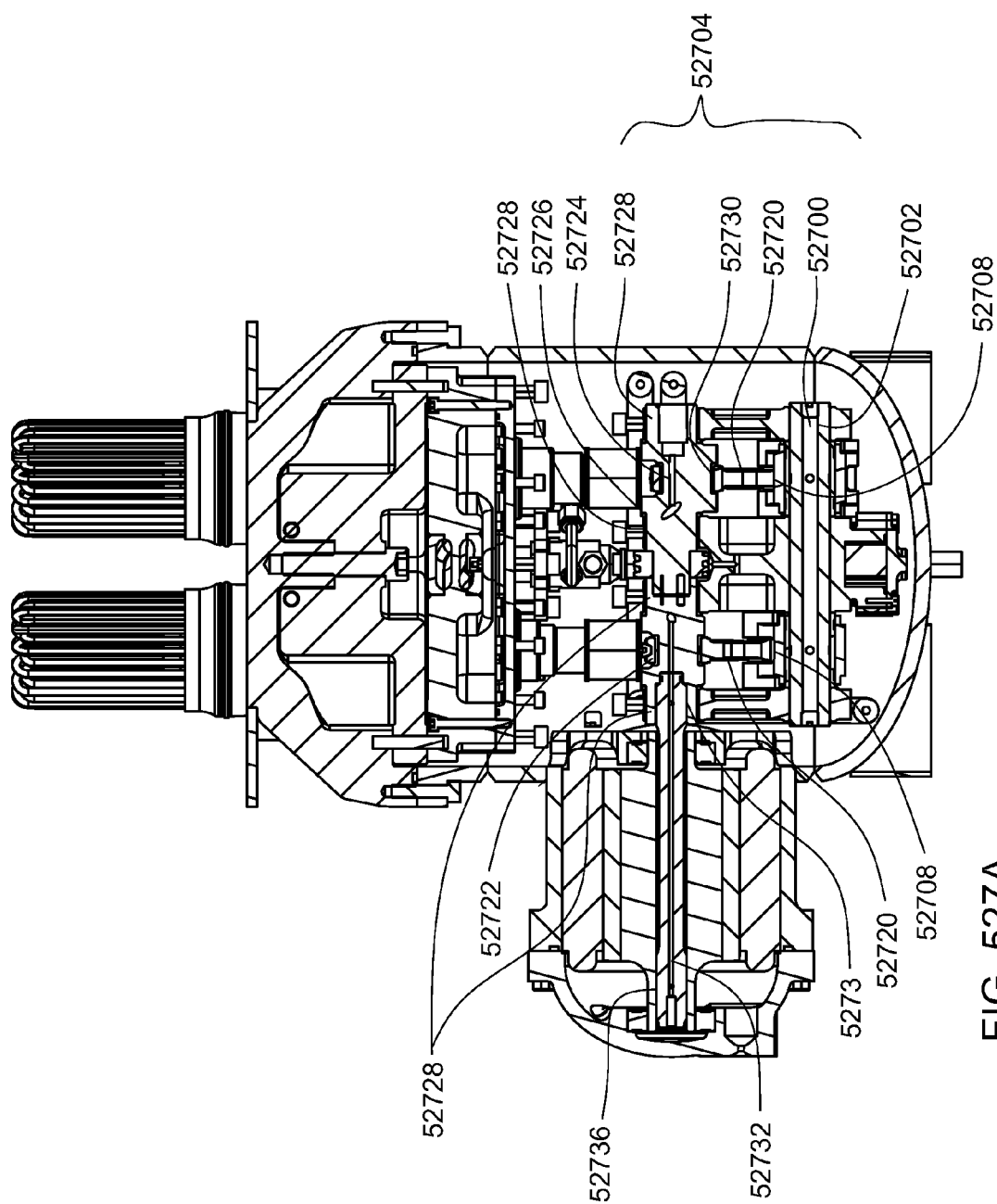


FIG. 527A

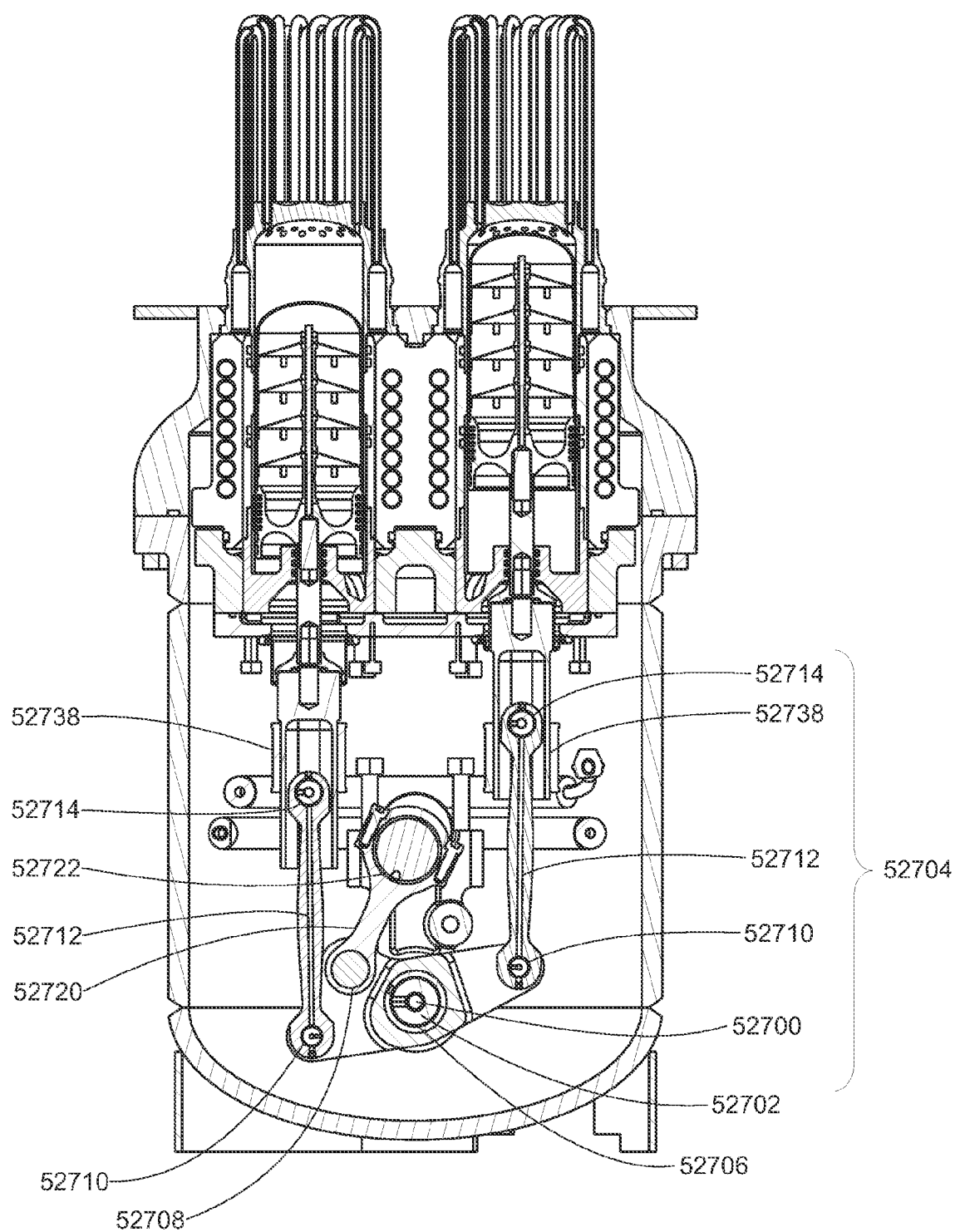


FIG. 527B

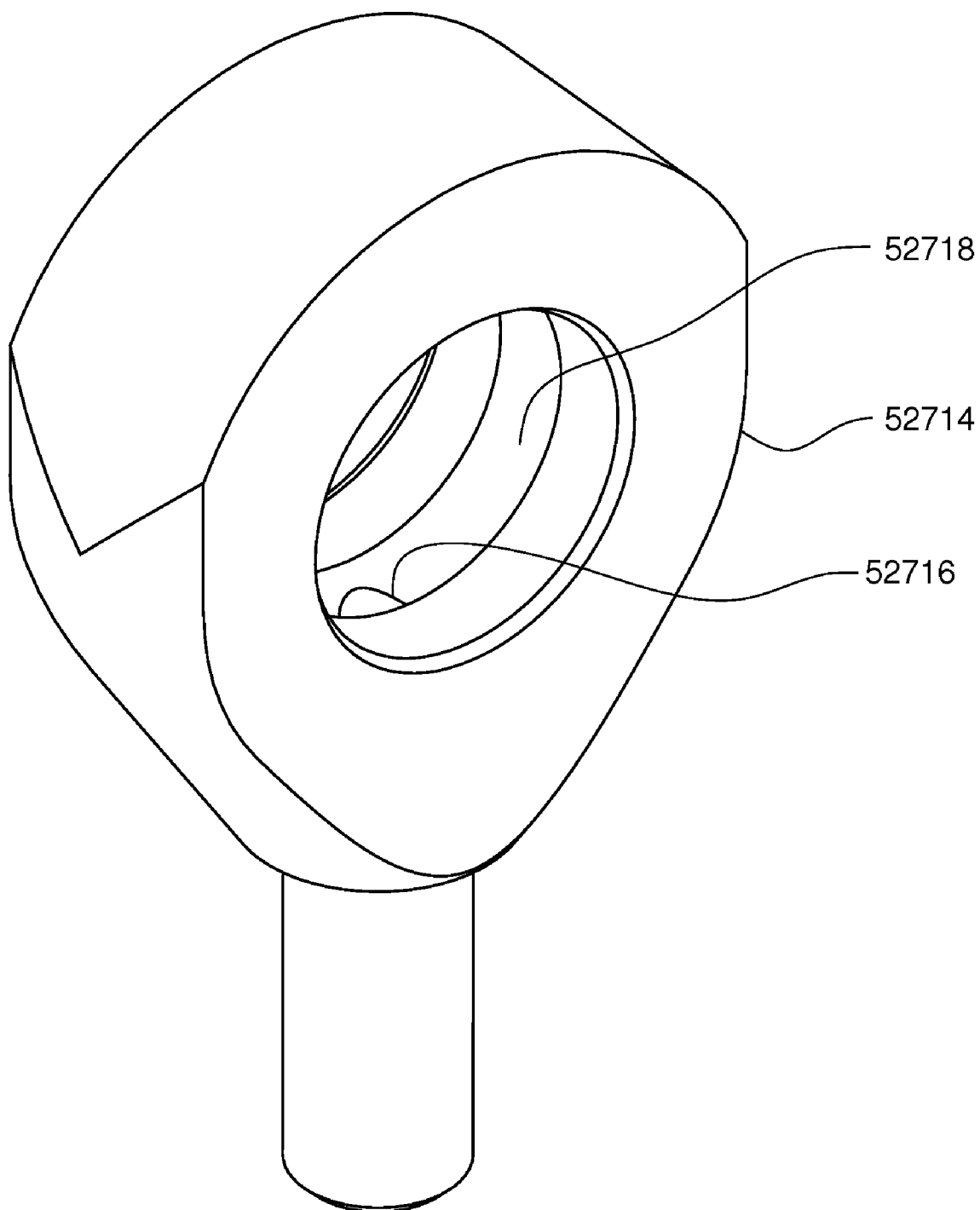


FIG. 527C

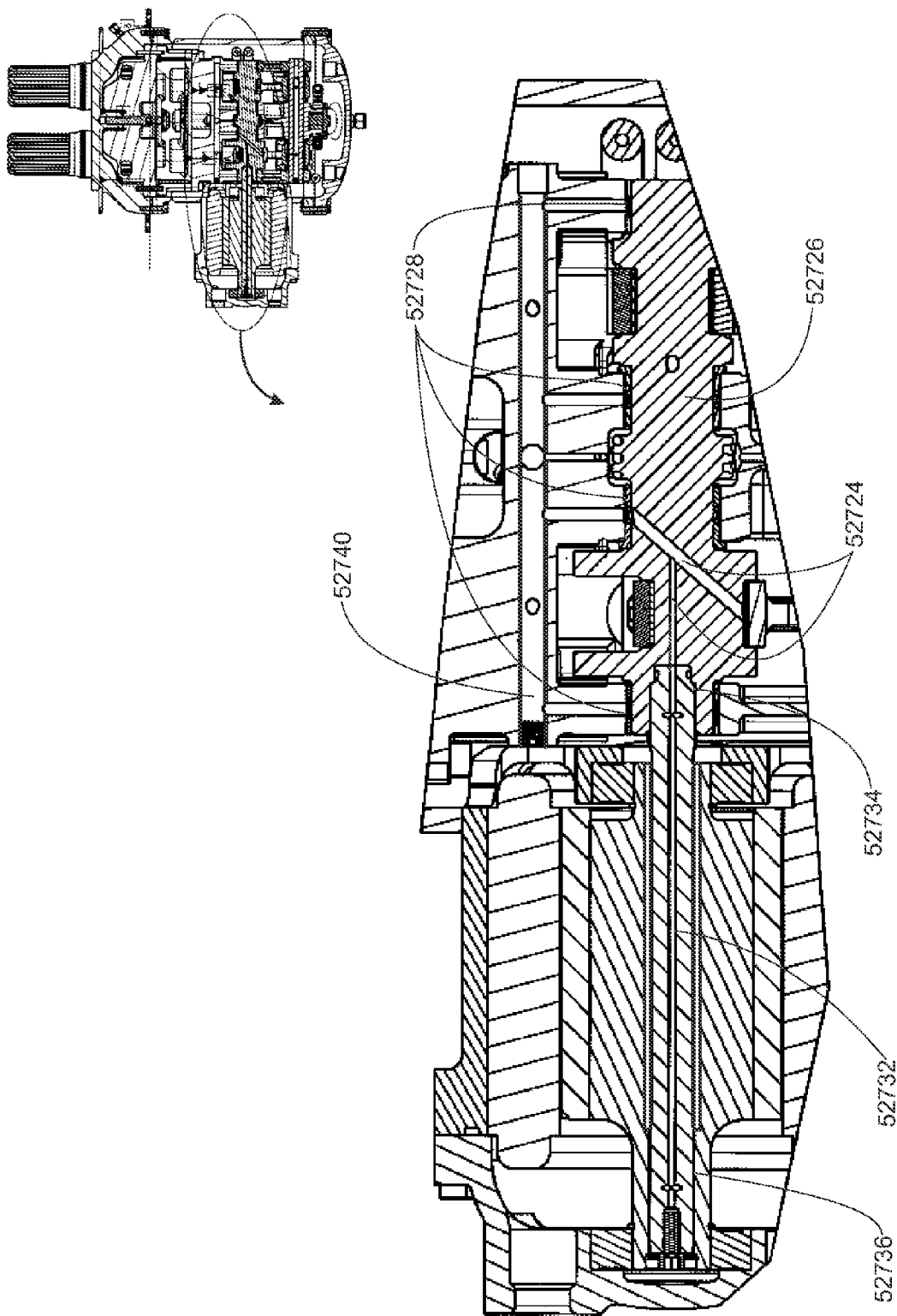


FIG. 527D

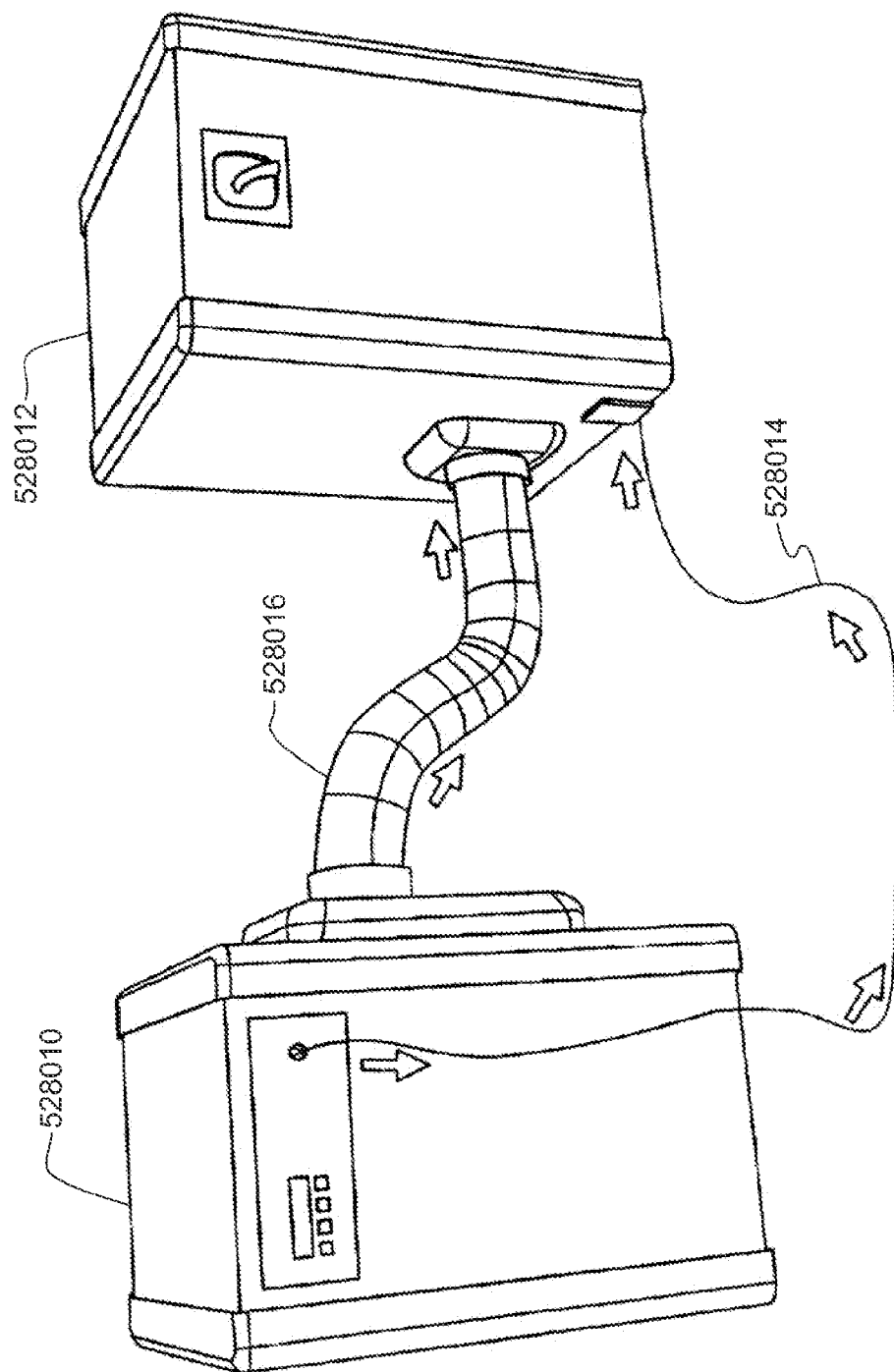
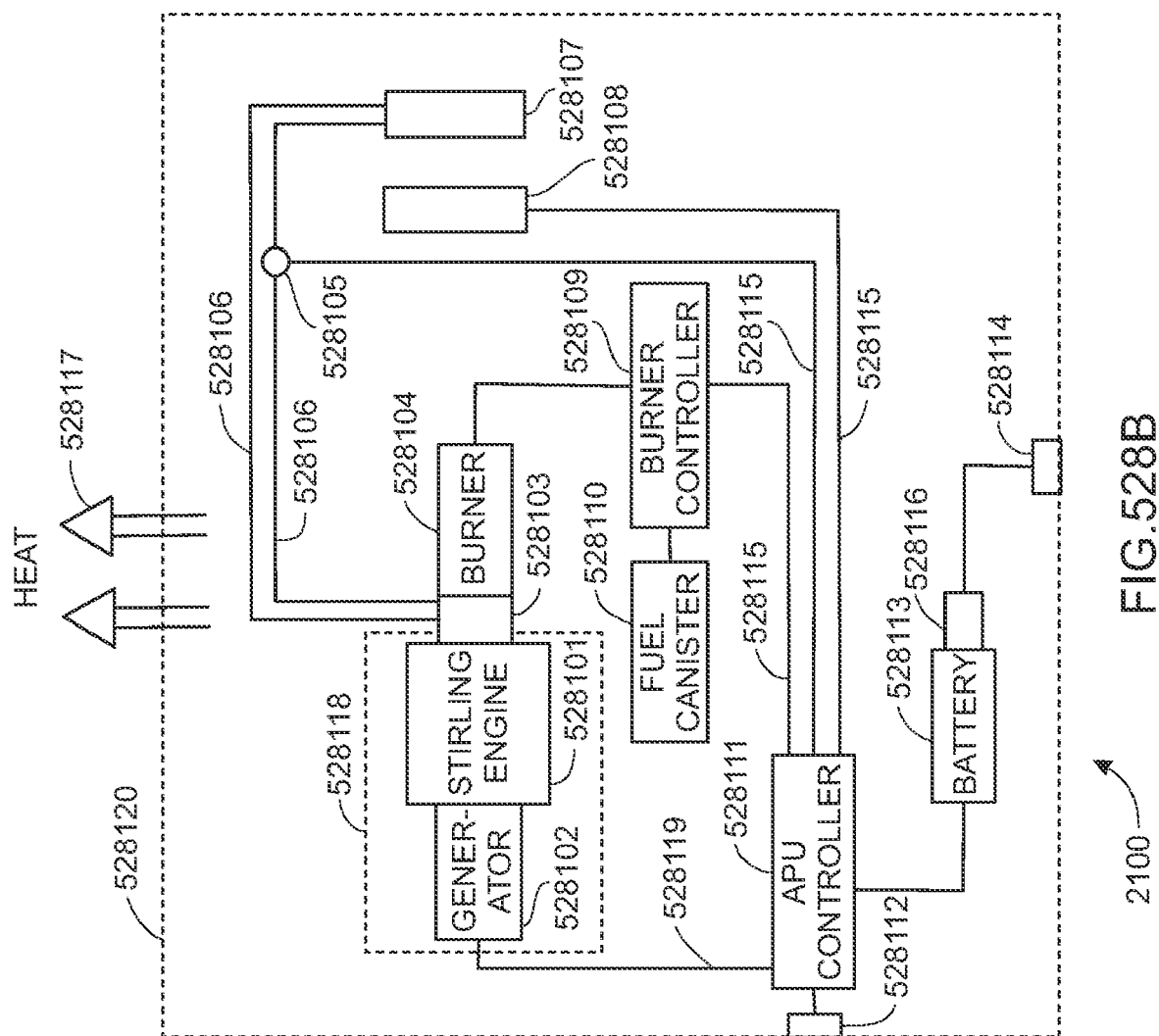


FIG. 528A



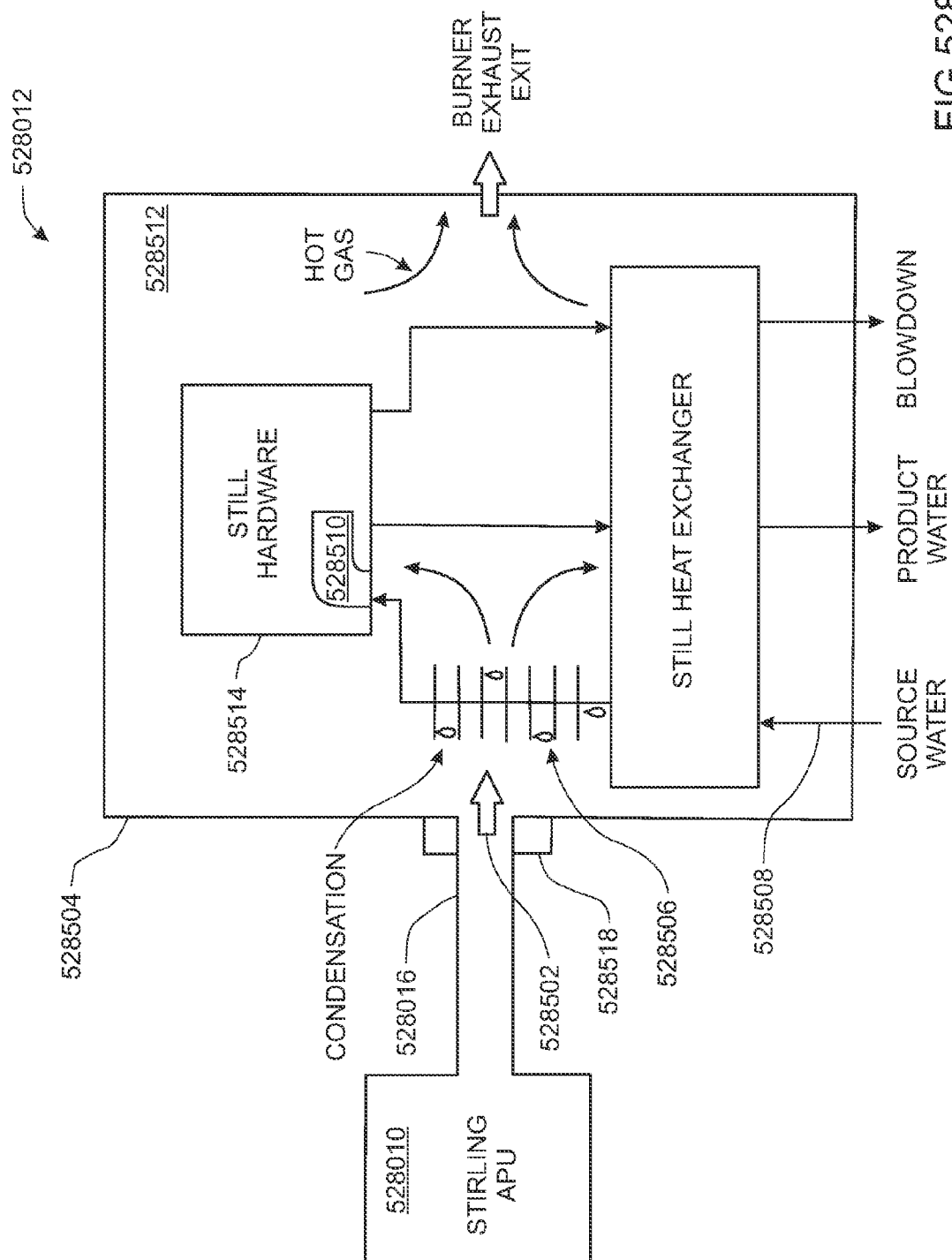


FIG. 528C

WATER VAPOR DISTILLATION APPARATUS, METHOD AND SYSTEM

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present application is a Non-Provisional Application which claims priority from U.S. Provisional Patent Application 60/933,525, filed Jun. 7, 2007.

[0002] This application is also a Continuation-In-Part of patent application Ser. No. 11/480,294 filed Jun. 30, 2006 and entitled Pressurized Vapor Cycle Liquid Distillation which is a Continuation-In-Part of patent application Ser. No. 10/713,617 filed Nov. 13, 2003 and entitled Pressurized Vapor Cycle Liquid Distillation which claims priority from the following United States Provisional Patent Applications, all of which are hereby incorporated herein by reference in their entireties:

[0003] U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/518,782 entitled Locally Powered Water Distillation filed on Nov. 10, 2003;

[0004] U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/490,615 entitled System and Methods for Distributed Utilities filed on Jul. 28, 2003; and

[0005] U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/425,820 entitled Pressurized Vapor Cycle filed on Nov. 13, 2002; all of which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entireties.

[0006] This application is also a Continuation-In-Part of patent application Ser. No. 11/168,239 filed Jun. 28, 2005 and entitled Fluid Transfer Using Devices and Rotatable Housings which is a Continuation-In-Part of patent application Ser. No. 10/720,802 filed Nov. 24, 2003 and entitled System and Method of Fluid Transfer Using Devices with Rotatable Housing which is a Continuation-In-Part of patent application Ser. No. 10/713,617 and entitled Pressurized Vapor Cycle Liquid Distillation which claims priority from the following United States Provisional Patent Applications, all of which are hereby incorporated herein by reference in their entireties:

[0007] U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/518,782 entitled Locally Powered Water Distillation filed on Nov. 10, 2003;

[0008] U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/490,615 entitled System and Methods for Distributed Utilities filed on Jul. 28, 2003; and

[0009] U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/425,820 entitled Pressurized Vapor Cycle filed on Nov. 13, 2002; all of which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entireties.

[0010] This application is also a Continuation-In-Part of patent application Ser. No. 10/713,591 filed Nov. 13, 2003 and entitled Liquid Ring Pumps with Hermetically Sealed Motor Rotors which claims priority from the following United States Provisional Patent Applications, both of which are hereby incorporated herein by reference in their entireties:

[0011] U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/490,615 entitled System and Methods for Distributed Utilities filed on Jul. 28, 2003; and

[0012] U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/425,820 entitled Pressurized Vapor Cycle filed on Nov. 13, 2002; both of which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entireties.

[0013] This application is also a Continuation-In-Part of patent application Ser. No. 10/713,617 filed Nov. 13, 2003 and entitled Pressurized Vapor Cycle Liquid Distillation which claims priority from the following United States Pro-

visional Patent Applications, all of which are hereby incorporated herein by reference in their entireties:

[0014] U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/518,782 entitled Locally Powered Water Distillation filed on Nov. 10, 2003;

[0015] U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/490,615 entitled System and Methods for Distributed Utilities filed on Jul. 28, 2003; and

[0016] U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/425,820 entitled Pressurized Vapor Cycle filed on Nov. 13, 2002; all of which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entireties.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0017] The present invention relates to water distillation and more particularly, to a water vapor distillation apparatus, method, and system.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

[0018] A dependable source of clean water eludes vast segments of humanity. For example, the Canadian International Development Agency reports that about 1.2 billion people lack access to safe drinking water. Published reports attribute millions and millions of deaths per year, mostly children, to water related diseases. Many water purification techniques are well known, including carbon filters, chlorination, pasteurization, and reverse osmosis. Many of these techniques are significantly affected by variations in the water quality and do not address a wide variety of common contaminants, such as bacteria, viruses, organics, arsenic, lead, mercury, and pesticides that may be found in water supplies in the developing world and elsewhere. Some of these systems require access to a supply of consumables, such as filters or chemicals. Moreover, some of these techniques are only well suited to centralized, large-scale water systems that require both a significant infrastructure and highly trained operators. The ability to produce reliable clean water without regard to the water source, on a smaller, decentralized scale, without the need for consumables and constant maintenance is very desirable, particularly in the developing world.

[0019] The use of vapor compression distillation to purify water is well known and may address many of these concerns. However, the poor financial resources, limited technical assets, and low population density that does not make it feasible to build centralized, large-scale water systems in much of the developing world, also limits the availability of adequate, affordable, and reliable power to operate vapor compression distillation systems, as well as hindering the ability to properly maintain such systems. In such circumstances, an improved vapor compression distillation system and associated components that increases efficiency and production capability, while decreasing the necessary power budget for system operation and the amount of system maintenance required may provide a solution.

SUMMARY

[0020] In accordance with one aspect of the present invention, a fluid vapor distillation apparatus is disclosed. The apparatus includes a source fluid input, and an evaporator condenser apparatus. The evaporator condenser apparatus includes a substantially cylindrical housing and a plurality of tubes in the housing. The source fluid input is fluidly connected to the evaporator condenser and the evaporator condenser transforms source fluid into steam and transforms

compressed steam into product fluid. Also included in the fluid vapor distillation apparatus is a heat exchanger fluidly connected to the source fluid input and a product fluid output. The heat exchanger includes an outer tube and at least one inner tube. Also included in the fluid vapor distillation apparatus is a regenerative blower fluidly connected to the evaporator condenser. The regenerative blower compresses steam, and the compressed steam flows to the evaporative condenser where compressed steam is transformed into product fluid.

[0021] Some embodiments of this aspect of the present invention include one or more of the following: where the heat exchanger is disposed about the housing of the evaporator condenser; where the heat exchanger further includes wherein the outer tube is a source fluid flow path and the at least one inner tube is a product fluid flow path; where the heat exchanger further includes at least three inner tubes; where the at least three inner tubes are twined to form a substantially helical shape; where the heat exchanger further includes two ends, and at each end a connector is attached, whereby the connectors form a connection to the evaporator condenser; where the evaporator condenser tubes further include packing inside the tubes; where the packing is a rod; where the evaporator condenser further includes a steam chest fluidly connected to the plurality of tubes; and where the regenerative blower further comprising an impeller assembly driven by a magnetic drive coupling.

[0022] In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, a water vapor distillation system is disclosed. The water vapor distillation system includes a source fluid input, and an evaporator condenser apparatus. The evaporator condenser apparatus includes a substantially cylindrical housing and a plurality of tubes in the housing. The source fluid input is fluidly connected to the evaporator condenser and the evaporator condenser transforms source fluid into steam and transforms compressed steam into product fluid. Also included in the fluid vapor distillation apparatus is a heat exchanger fluidly connected to the source fluid input and a product fluid output. The heat exchanger includes an outer tube and at least one inner tube. Also included in the fluid vapor distillation apparatus is a regenerative blower fluidly connected to the evaporator condenser. The regenerative blower compresses steam, and the compressed steam flows to the evaporative condenser where compressed steam is transformed into product fluid.

[0023] The water vapor distillation system also includes a Stirling engine electrically connected to the water vapor distillation apparatus. The Stirling engine at least partially powers the water vapor distillation apparatus.

[0024] Some embodiments of this aspect of the present invention include where the Stirling engine includes at least one rocking drive mechanism where the rocking drive mechanism includes: a rocking beam having a rocker pivot, at least one cylinder and at least one piston. The piston is housed within a respective cylinder. The piston is capable of substantially linearly reciprocating within the respective cylinder. Also, the drive mechanism includes at least one coupling assembly having a proximal end and a distal end. The proximal end is connected to the piston and the distal end is connected to the rocking beam by an end pivot. The linear motion of the piston is converted to rotary motion of the rocking beam. Also, a crankcase housing the rocking beam and housing a first portion of the coupling assembly is included. A crankshaft coupled to the rocking beam by way of a connecting rod is also included. The rotary motion of the rocking

beam is transferred to the crankshaft. The machine also includes a working space housing the at least one cylinder, the at least one piston and a second portion of the coupling assembly. A seal is included for sealing the workspace from the crankcase.

[0025] Additionally, some embodiments of this aspect of the present invention include any one or more of the following: where the seal is a rolling diaphragm; also, where the coupling assembly further includes a piston rod and a link rod; where the piston rod and link rod are coupled together by a coupling means; where the heat exchanger is disposed about the housing of the evaporator condenser; where the heat exchanger further comprising wherein the outer tube is a source fluid flow path and the at least one inner tube is a product fluid flow path; where the heat exchanger further comprising at least three inner tubes; where the evaporator condenser further includes a steam chest fluidly connected to the plurality of tubes; and where the regenerative blower further includes an impeller assembly driven by a magnetic drive coupling.

[0026] These aspects of the invention are not meant to be exclusive and other features, aspects, and advantages of the present invention will be readily apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art when read in conjunction with the appended claims and accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0027] These and other features and advantages of the present invention will be better understood by reading the following detailed description, taken together with the drawings wherein:

[0028] FIG. 1 is an isometric view of the water vapor distillation apparatus;

[0029] FIG. 1A is an exploded view of the exemplary embodiment of the disclosure;

[0030] FIG. 1B is a cross-section view of the exemplary embodiment;

[0031] FIG. 1C is a cross-section view of the exemplary embodiment;

[0032] FIG. 1D is an assembly view of the exemplary embodiment;

[0033] FIG. 1E is a detail view of the exemplary embodiment of the frame;

[0034] FIG. 1F is an assembly view of an alternate embodiment;

[0035] FIG. 1G is an assembly view of an alternate embodiment;

[0036] FIG. 1H is an assembly view of an alternate embodiment;

[0037] FIG. 2 is an assembly view of the exemplary embodiment of the tube-in-tube heat exchanger assembly;

[0038] FIG. 2A is an exploded view one embodiment of the tube-in-tube heat exchanger;

[0039] FIG. 2B is an isometric view of the exemplary embodiment of the tube-in-tube heat exchanger from the back;

[0040] FIG. 2C is an isometric view of the exemplary embodiment of the tube-in-tube heat exchanger from the front;

[0041] FIG. 2D is a cross-section view of one embodiment of the tube-in-tube heat exchanger;

[0042] FIG. 2E is an exploded view of an alternate embodiment of a tube-in-tube heat exchanger;

[0043] FIG. 2F is a cut away view of one embodiment of the tube-in-tube heat exchanger illustrating the helical arrangement of the inner tubes;

[0044] FIG. 2G is an exploded view of an alternate embodiment of a tube-in-tube heat exchanger;

[0045] FIG. 2H is an isometric view of the exemplary embodiment of the tube-in-tube heat exchanger;

[0046] FIG. 2I is an isometric view of the exemplary embodiment of the tube-in-tube heat exchanger;

[0047] FIG. 2J is an exploded view of an alternate embodiment of the tube-in-tube heat exchanger configuration;

[0048] FIG. 2K is an assembly view of an alternate embodiment of the tube-in-tube heat exchanger configuration;

[0049] FIG. 2L is an assembly view of an alternate embodiment of the tube-in-tube heat exchanger configuration;

[0050] FIG. 2M is a detail view of an alternate embodiment of the tube-in-tube heat exchanger configuration;

[0051] FIG. 2N is a detail view of an alternate embodiment of the tube-in-tube heat exchanger configuration;

[0052] FIG. 2O is a schematic of an alternate embodiment of the tube-in-tube heat exchanger configuration;

[0053] FIG. 2P is an assembly view of an alternate embodiment of the heat exchanger;

[0054] FIG. 2Q is an exploded view of an alternate embodiment of the heat exchanger;

[0055] FIG. 2R is a section view of an alternate embodiment of the heat exchanger;

[0056] FIG. 3 is an exploded view of the connectors for the fitting assembly that attaches to the tube-in-tube heat exchanger;

[0057] FIG. 3A is a cross-section view of fitting assembly for the tube-in-tube heat exchanger;

[0058] FIG. 3B is a cross-section view of fitting assembly for the tube-in-tube heat exchanger;

[0059] FIG. 3C is an isometric view of the exemplary embodiment for the first connector;

[0060] FIG. 3D is a cross-section view of the exemplary embodiment for the first connector;

[0061] FIG. 3E is a cross-section view of the exemplary embodiment for the first connector;

[0062] FIG. 3F is a cross-section view of the exemplary embodiment for the first connector;

[0063] FIG. 3G is an isometric view of the exemplary embodiment for the second connector;

[0064] FIG. 3H is a cross-section view of fitting assembly for the tube-in-tube heat exchanger;

[0065] FIG. 3I is a cross-section view of the exemplary embodiment for the second connector;

[0066] FIG. 3J is a cross-section view of the exemplary embodiment for the second connector;

[0067] FIG. 4 is an isometric view of the exemplary embodiment of the evaporator/condenser assembly;

[0068] FIG. 4A is a cross-section view of the exemplary embodiment of the evaporator/condenser assembly;

[0069] FIG. 4B is an isometric cross-section view of the exemplary embodiment of the evaporator/condenser;

[0070] FIG. 4C is an isometric view of an alternate embodiment of the evaporator/condenser assembly;

[0071] FIG. 5 is an assembly view of the exemplary embodiment of the sump;

[0072] FIG. 5A is an exploded view of the exemplary embodiment of the sump;

[0073] FIG. 6 is an isometric detail view of the flange for the sump assembly;

[0074] FIG. 7 is an exploded view of the exemplary embodiment of the evaporator/condenser;

[0075] FIG. 7A is a top view of the exemplary embodiment of the evaporator/condenser assembly;

[0076] FIG. 7B shows the rate of distillate output for an evaporator as a function of pressure for several liquid boiling modes;

[0077] FIG. 8 is an isometric view of the exemplary embodiment of the tube for the evaporator/condenser;

[0078] FIG. 9 is an exploded view of the tube and rod configuration for the evaporator/condenser;

[0079] FIG. 9A is an isometric view of the exemplary embodiment of the rod for the evaporator/condenser;

[0080] FIG. 10 is an isometric view of the exemplary embodiment of the sump tube sheet;

[0081] FIG. 10A is an isometric view of the exemplary embodiment of the upper tube sheet;

[0082] FIG. 11 is a detail view of the top cap for the evaporator/condenser;

[0083] FIG. 12 is an isometric view of the exemplary embodiment of the steam chest;

[0084] FIG. 12A is an isometric view of the exemplary embodiment of the steam chest;

[0085] FIG. 12B is a cross-section view of the exemplary embodiment of the steam chest;

[0086] FIG. 12C is an exploded view of the exemplary embodiment of the steam chest;

[0087] FIG. 12D is an isometric view of an alternate embodiment;

[0088] FIG. 12E is a cross-section view of the exemplary embodiment of the steam chest;

[0089] FIG. 12F is a cross-section view of the exemplary embodiment of the steam chest;

[0090] FIG. 13 is an assembly view of an alternate embodiment of the evaporator/condenser;

[0091] FIG. 13A is a cross-section view of the alternate embodiment of the evaporator/condenser;

[0092] FIG. 13B is an assembly view of an alternate embodiment of the evaporator/condenser illustrating the arrangement of the tubes;

[0093] FIG. 13C is a cross-section view of the alternate embodiment of the evaporator/condenser illustrating the arrangement of the tubes;

[0094] FIG. 13D is an isometric view of the alternate embodiment of the evaporator/condenser without the sump installed;

[0095] FIG. 13E is an exploded view of the alternate embodiment of the evaporator/condenser;

[0096] FIG. 14 is an isometric view of the mist eliminator assembly;

[0097] FIG. 14A is an isometric view of the outside of the cap for the mist eliminator;

[0098] FIG. 14B is an isometric view of the inside of the cap for the mist eliminator;

[0099] FIG. 14C is a cross-section view of the mist eliminator assembly;

[0100] FIG. 14D is a cross-section view of the mist eliminator assembly;

[0101] FIG. 15 is an assembly view of the exemplary embodiment of a regenerative blower;

[0102] FIG. 15A is a bottom view of the exemplary embodiment of the regenerative blower assembly;

[0103] FIG. 15B is a top view of the exemplary embodiment of the regenerative blower assembly;

[0104] FIG. 15C is an exploded view of the exemplary embodiment of the regenerative blower;

[0105] FIG. 15D is a detailed view of the outer surface of the upper section of the housing for the exemplary embodiment of the regenerative blower;

[0106] FIG. 15E is a detailed view of the inner surface of the upper section of the housing for the exemplary embodiment of the regenerative blower;

[0107] FIG. 15F is a detailed view of the inner surface of the lower section of the housing for the exemplary embodiment of the regenerative blower;

[0108] FIG. 15G is a detailed view of the outer surface of the lower section of the housing for the exemplary embodiment of the regenerative blower;

[0109] FIG. 15H is a cross-section view of the exemplary embodiment of the regenerative blower;

[0110] FIG. 15I is a cross-section view of the exemplary embodiment of the regenerative blower;

[0111] FIG. 15J is a cross-section view of the exemplary embodiment of the regenerative blower;

[0112] FIG. 15K is a schematic of the exemplary embodiment of the regenerative blower assembly;

[0113] FIG. 15L is a cross-section view of the exemplary embodiment of the regenerative blower;

[0114] FIG. 16 is a detailed view of the impeller assembly for the exemplary embodiment of the regenerative blower;

[0115] FIG. 16A is a cross-section view of the impeller assembly;

[0116] FIG. 17 is an assembly view of the alternate embodiment of a regenerative blower;

[0117] FIG. 17A is an assembly view of the alternate embodiment of a regenerative blower;

[0118] FIG. 17B is a cross-section view of the alternate embodiment of the regenerative blower assembly;

[0119] FIG. 17C is a cross-section view of the alternate embodiment of the regenerative blower assembly;

[0120] FIG. 17D is a cross-section view of the alternate embodiment of the regenerative blower assembly;

[0121] FIG. 17E is an exploded view of the alternate embodiment of the regenerative blower;

[0122] FIG. 17F is an assembly view of the impeller housing;

[0123] FIG. 17G is an exploded view of the impeller housing;

[0124] FIG. 17H is a cross-section view of the alternate embodiment for the impeller housing assembly;

[0125] FIG. 17I is a cross-section view of the alternate embodiment for the impeller housing assembly;

[0126] FIG. 17J is a bottom view of the lower section of the impeller housing;

[0127] FIG. 17K is a detail view of the inner surface of the lower section of the impeller housing;

[0128] FIG. 17L is a top view of the upper section of the impeller housing assembly;

[0129] FIG. 17M is a top view of the upper section of the housing for the impeller assembly without the cover installed;

[0130] FIG. 17N is a detailed view of the inner surface of the upper section of the housing for the impeller assembly;

[0131] FIG. 18 is a detailed view of the impeller assembly for the alternate embodiment of the regenerative blower;

[0132] FIG. 18A is a cross-section view of the impeller assembly;

[0133] FIG. 19 is an assembly view of the level sensor assembly;

[0134] FIG. 19A is an exploded view of the exemplary embodiment of the level sensor assembly;

[0135] FIG. 19B is cross-section view of the settling tank within the level sensor housing;

[0136] FIG. 19C is cross-section view of the blowdown sensor and product level sensor reservoirs within the level sensor housing;

[0137] FIG. 19D is an assembly view of an alternate embodiment of the level sensor assembly;

[0138] FIG. 19E is an exploded view of an alternate embodiment of the level sensor assembly;

[0139] FIG. 19F is a cross-section view of an alternate embodiment of the level sensor assembly;

[0140] FIG. 19G is a schematic of the operation of the level sensor assembly;

[0141] FIG. 19H is an alternate embodiment of the level sensor assembly;

[0142] FIG. 20 is an isometric view of level sensor assembly;

[0143] FIG. 20A is cross-section view of the level sensor assembly;

[0144] FIG. 21 is an isometric view of the front side of the bearing feed-water pump;

[0145] FIG. 21A is an isometric view of the back side of the bearing feed-water pump;

[0146] FIG. 22 is a schematic of the flow path of the source water for the exemplary embodiment of the water vapor distillation apparatus;

[0147] FIG. 22A is a schematic of the source water entering the heat exchanger;

[0148] FIG. 22B is a schematic of the source water passing through the heat exchanger;

[0149] FIG. 22C is a schematic of the source water exiting the heat exchanger;

[0150] FIG. 22D is a schematic of the source water passing through the regenerative blower;

[0151] FIG. 22E is a schematic of the source water exiting the regenerative blower and entering

[0152] FIG. 23 is a schematic of the flow paths of the blowdown water for the exemplary embodiment of the water vapor distillation apparatus;

[0153] FIG. 23A is a schematic of the blowdown water exiting evaporator/condenser assembly and entering the level sensor housing;

[0154] FIG. 23B is a schematic of the blowdown water filling the settling tank within the level sensor housing;

[0155] FIG. 23C is a schematic of the blowdown water filling the blowdown level sensor reservoir within the level sensor housing;

[0156] FIG. 23D is a schematic of the blowdown water exiting the level sensor housing and entering the strainer;

[0157] FIG. 23E is a schematic of the blowdown water exiting the strainer and entering the heat exchanger;

[0158] FIG. 23F is a schematic of the blowdown water passing through the heat exchanger;

[0159] FIG. 23G is a schematic of the blowdown water exiting the heat exchanger;

[0160] FIG. 24 is a schematic of the flow paths of the product water for the exemplary embodiment the water vapor distillation apparatus;

[0161] FIG. 24A is a schematic of the product water exiting the evaporator/condenser assembly and entering the level sensor housing;

[0162] FIG. 24B is a schematic of the product water entering the product level sensor reservoir within the level sensor housing;

[0163] FIG. 24C is a schematic of the product water exiting the product level sensor reservoir and entering the heat exchanger;

[0164] FIG. 24D is a schematic of the product water passing through the heat exchanger;

[0165] FIG. 24E is a schematic of the product water exiting the heat exchanger;

[0166] FIG. 24F is a schematic of the product water entering the bearing-feed water reservoir within the level sensor housing;

[0167] FIG. 24G is a schematic of the product water exiting the level sensor housing and entering the bearing feed-water pump;

[0168] FIG. 24H is a schematic of the product water exiting the bearing feed-water pump and entering the regenerative blower;

[0169] FIG. 24I is a schematic of the product water exiting the regenerative blower and entering the level sensor housing;

[0170] FIG. 25 is a schematic of the vent paths for the exemplary embodiment the water vapor distillation apparatus;

[0171] FIG. 25A is a schematic of the vent path allowing air to exit the blowdown sensor reservoir and enter the evaporative/condenser;

[0172] FIG. 25B is a schematic of the vent path allowing air to exit the product sensor reservoir and enter the evaporative/condenser;

[0173] FIG. 25C is a schematic of the vent path allowing air to exit the evaporator/condenser assembly;

[0174] FIG. 26 is a schematic of the low-pressure steam entering the tubes of the evaporator/condenser assembly from the sump;

[0175] FIG. 26A is a schematic of the low-pressure steam passing through the tubes of the evaporator/condenser assembly;

[0176] FIG. 26B is a schematic of the wet-low-pressure steam exiting the tubes of the evaporator/condenser assembly and entering the steam chest;

[0177] FIG. 26C is a schematic of the wet-low-pressure steam flowing through the steam chest of the evaporator/condenser assembly;

[0178] FIG. 26D is a schematic of the creation of blowdown water as the low-pressure steam passing through the steam chest;

[0179] FIG. 26E is a schematic of the dry-low-pressure steam exiting the steam chest and entering the regenerative blower;

[0180] FIG. 26F is a schematic of the dry-low-pressure steam passing through the regenerative blower;

[0181] FIG. 26G is a schematic of the high-pressure steam exiting the regenerative blower;

[0182] FIG. 26H is a schematic of the high-pressure steam entering the steam tube;

[0183] FIG. 26I is a schematic of the high-pressure steam exiting the steam tube and entering the evaporator/condenser chamber;

[0184] FIG. 26J is a schematic of the creation of product water from the high-pressure steam condensing within the evaporator/condenser chamber;

[0185] FIG. 27 is a chart illustrating the relationship between the differential pressure across the regenerative blower and the amount of energy required to produce one liter of product;

[0186] FIG. 28 is a chart illustrating the relationship between the production rate of product and the number of heat transfer tubes within the evaporator/condenser assembly;

[0187] FIG. 29 is a chart illustrating the production rate of product water of the evaporator/condenser assembly as a function of the amount of heat transfer surface area with the evaporator/condenser chamber;

[0188] FIG. 30 is a chart illustrating the efficiency of heat transfer surfaces for a varying amount of heat transfer tubes within the evaporator/condenser chamber as related to the change in pressure across the regenerative blower;

[0189] FIG. 31 is a chart illustrating the production rate and the amount of energy consumed by the evaporator/condenser assembly at different pressure differentials across the regenerative blower;

[0190] FIG. 32 is a cross-sectional and top view of a rotor and stator in accordance with a particular embodiment showing the support structure for the input, the vanes and chambers between the vanes, and the rotating drive shaft;

[0191] FIG. 32A is a side top view of a rotor and stator corresponding to the embodiment shown in FIG. 32, showing the support structures for the input and output, the vanes, the eccentric configuration within the housing unit, and the drive shaft;

[0192] FIG. 32B is a top view of a rotor and stator corresponding to the embodiment shown in FIGS. 32 and 32A, showing support structures for input and output, the vanes, the eccentric configuration within the housing unit, and the drive shaft;

[0193] FIG. 32C is a cross-sectional view of a rotor and stator corresponding to the embodiment shown in FIGS. 32, 32A, and 32B showing vanes, drive shaft, and bearings;

[0194] FIG. 32D is a cross-sectional view of a liquid ring pump according to one embodiment showing a capacitive sensor;

[0195] FIG. 32E is a cross-sectional view of a liquid ring pump according to one embodiment showing the eccentric rotor, rotor vanes, drive shaft with bearings, the rotating housing unit for the liquid ring pump, the still housing, and the cyclone effect and resulting mist and water droplet elimination from the steam;

[0196] FIG. 32F is a schematic diagram of An alternate embodiment for the liquid ring pump;

[0197] FIG. 32G is a top view of an alternate embodiment for a rotor showing multiple vanes and chambers between the vanes, and intake and exit holes in each individual chamber;

[0198] FIG. 32H is further detail of a liquid ring pump showing the stationary intake port and the rotating drive shaft, rotor and housing unit;

[0199] FIG. 32I is a view of a seal which may be present between the stationary and rotor sections of a liquid ring pump separating the intake orifice from the exit orifice;

[0200] FIG. 33 is side view of a backpressure regulator in accordance with one embodiment;

[0201] FIG. 33A is a diagonal view of the backpressure regulator shown in FIG. 33;

[0202] FIG. 33B is a side view of an alternate embodiment of the backpressure regulator having a vertically positioned port;

[0203] FIG. 33C is a diagonal view of the backpressure regulator shown in FIG. 33B;

[0204] FIG. 33D is a diagonal view of an alternate embodiment of the backpressure regulator;

[0205] FIG. 33E is a close-up view of section C of FIG. 33D, depicting a notch in the port of the backpressure regulator;

[0206] FIG. 33F is a cutaway side view of one embodiment of the backpressure regulator;

[0207] FIG. 33G is a close up view of section E of FIG. 33F, depicting a small opening in an orifice of the backpressure regulator;

[0208] FIG. 34 is a schematic of a backpressure regulator implemented within a apparatus;

[0209] FIG. 35 is a schematic of an alternate embodiment for a water vapor distillation apparatus;

[0210] FIG. 35A is a detailed schematic of an alternate embodiment for the level sensor housing illustrating an external connecting valve between source and blowdown fluid lines;

[0211] FIG. 36 is a view of one face of the pump side of a fluid distribution manifold;

[0212] FIG. 36A is a view of a second face of the pump side of a fluid distribution manifold;

[0213] FIG. 36B is a view of one face of the evaporator/condenser side of a fluid distribution manifold;

[0214] FIG. 36C is a view of a second face of the evaporator/condenser side of a fluid distribution manifold;

[0215] FIG. 37 is a top view of a coupler of an alternate embodiment of a fitting assembly;

[0216] FIG. 37A is a side view of an alternate embodiment of a fitting assembly in FIG. 37;

[0217] FIG. 38 is a cross-sectional view of alternate embodiment of the evaporator/condenser having individual heating layers and ribs;

[0218] FIG. 38A is a detail of a cross-section of an alternate embodiment of the evaporator/condenser showing how the ribs effectively partition the steam/evaporation from the liquid/condensation layers;

[0219] FIG. 39 is a schematic diagram of an alternate embodiment for the heat exchanger;

[0220] FIG. 39A is schematic diagram of an alternative embodiment for the heat exchanger;

[0221] FIG. 40 is a schematic overview of the an alternate embodiment of the water vapor distillation apparatus including a pressure measurement of the system using a cold sensor;

[0222] FIG. 41 is shows a view of a flip-filter with the intake stream and blowdown stream flowing through filter units, each filter unit rotating around a pivot joint about a center axis;

[0223] FIG. 41A shows flip filter housing;

[0224] FIG. 41B is detail view of the flip-filter in FIG. 41;

[0225] FIG. 41C is an alternative embodiment of a multi-unit flip filter;

[0226] FIG. 41D is a schematic of an alternate embodiment of a flip-filter;

[0227] FIG. 41E is a schematic of the flow path of one embodiment of the flip-filter;

[0228] FIG. 41F is a schematic illustrating a manual switch for changing water flow through individual units of a flip-filter in FIG. 41E;

[0229] FIG. 42 is a depiction of a monitoring system for distributed utilities;

[0230] FIG. 43 is a depiction of a distribution system for utilities;

[0231] FIG. 44 is a conceptual flow diagram of a possible embodiment of a system incorporating an alternate embodiment of the water vapor distillation apparatus;

[0232] FIG. 44A is a schematic block diagram of a power source for use with the system shown in FIG. 44;

[0233] FIGS. 51A-51E depict the principle of operation of a Stirling cycle machine;

[0234] FIG. 52 shows a view of a rocking beam drive in accordance with one embodiment;

[0235] FIG. 53 shows a view of a rocking beam drive in accordance with one embodiment;

[0236] FIG. 54 shows a view of an engine in accordance with one embodiment;

[0237] FIGS. 55A-55D depicts various views of a rocking beam drive in accordance with one embodiment;

[0238] FIG. 56 shows a bearing style rod connector in accordance with one embodiment;

[0239] FIGS. 57A-57B show a flexure in accordance with one embodiment;

[0240] FIG. 58 shows a four cylinder double rocking beam drive arrangement in accordance with one embodiment;

[0241] FIG. 59 shows a cross section of a crankshaft in accordance with one embodiment;

[0242] FIG. 510A shows a view of an engine in accordance with one embodiment;

[0243] FIG. 510B shows a crankshaft coupling in accordance with one embodiment;

[0244] FIG. 510C shows a view of a sleeve rotor in accordance with one embodiment;

[0245] FIG. 510D shows a view of a crankshaft in accordance with one embodiment;

[0246] FIG. 510E is a cross section of the sleeve rotor and spline shaft in accordance with one embodiment;

[0247] FIG. 510F is a cross section of the crankshaft and the spline shaft in accordance with one embodiment;

[0248] FIG. 510G are various views a sleeve rotor, crankshaft and spline shaft in accordance with one embodiment;

[0249] FIG. 511 shows the operation of pistons of an engine in accordance with one embodiment;

[0250] FIG. 512A shows an unwrapped schematic view of a working space and cylinders in accordance with one embodiment;

[0251] FIG. 512B shows a schematic view of a cylinder, heater head, and regenerator in accordance with one embodiment;

[0252] FIG. 512C shows a view of a cylinder head in accordance with one embodiment;

[0253] FIG. 513A shows a view of a rolling diaphragm, along with supporting top seal piston and bottom seal piston, in accordance with one embodiment;

[0254] FIG. 513B shows an exploded view of a rocking beam driven engine in accordance with one embodiment;

[0255] FIG. 513C shows a view of a cylinder, heater head, regenerator, and rolling diaphragm, in accordance with one embodiment;

[0256] FIGS. 513D-513E show various views of a rolling diaphragm during operation, in accordance with one embodiment;

[0257] FIG. 513F shows an unwrapped schematic view of a working space and cylinders in accordance with one embodiment;

[0258] FIG. 513G shows a view of an external combustion engine in accordance with one;

[0259] FIGS. 514A-514E show views of various embodiments of a rolling diaphragm;

[0260] FIG. 515A shows a view of a metal bellows and accompanying piston rod and pistons in accordance with one embodiment;

[0261] FIGS. 515B-515D show views of metal bellows diaphragms, in accordance with one embodiment;

[0262] FIGS. 515E-515G show a view of metal bellows in accordance with various embodiments;

[0263] FIG. 515H shows a schematic of a rolling diaphragm identifying various load regions;

[0264] FIG. 515I shows a schematic of the rolling diaphragm identifying the convolution region;

[0265] FIG. 516 shows a view of a piston and piston seal in accordance with one embodiment;

[0266] FIG. 517 shows a view of a piston rod and piston rod seal in accordance with one embodiment;

[0267] FIG. 518A shows a view of a piston seal backing ring in accordance with one embodiment;

[0268] FIG. 518B shows a pressure diagram for a backing ring in accordance with one embodiment;

[0269] FIGS. 518C and 518D show a piston seal in accordance with one embodiment;

[0270] FIGS. 518E and 518F show a piston rod seal in accordance with one embodiment;

[0271] FIG. 519A shows a view of a piston seal backing ring in accordance with one embodiment;

[0272] FIG. 519B shows a pressure diagram for a piston seal backing ring in accordance with one embodiment;

[0273] FIG. 520A shows a view of a piston rod seal backing ring in accordance with one embodiment;

[0274] FIG. 520B shows a pressure diagram for a piston rod seal backing ring in accordance with one embodiment;

[0275] FIG. 521 shows views of a piston guide ring in accordance with one embodiment;

[0276] FIG. 522 shows an unwrapped schematic illustration of a working space and cylinders in accordance with one embodiment;

[0277] FIG. 523A shows a view of an engine in accordance with one embodiment;

[0278] FIG. 523B shows a view of an engine in accordance with one embodiment;

[0279] FIG. 524 shows a view of a crankshaft in accordance with one embodiment;

[0280] FIGS. 525A-525C show various configurations of pump drives in accordance with various embodiments;

[0281] FIG. 526A shows various views of an oil pump in accordance with one embodiment;

[0282] FIG. 526B shows a view of an engine in accordance with one embodiment;

[0283] FIG. 526C shows another view of the engine depicted in FIG. 526B;

[0284] FIGS. 527A and 527B show views of an engine in accordance with one embodiment;

[0285] FIG. 527C shows a view of a coupling joint in accordance with one embodiment;

[0286] FIG. 527D shows a view of a crankshaft and spline shaft of an engine in accordance with one embodiment;

[0287] FIG. 528A shows an illustrative view of a generator connected to one embodiment of the apparatus;

[0288] FIG. 528B shows a schematic representation of an auxiliary power unit for providing electrical power and heat to a water vapor distillation apparatus; and

[0289] FIG. 528C shows a schematic view of a system according to one embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0290] Definitions. As used in this description and the accompanying claims, the following terms shall have the meanings indicated, unless the context otherwise requires.

[0291] The term “fluid” is used herein to include any type of fluid including water. Thus, although the exemplary embodiment and various other embodiments are described herein with reference to water, the scope of the apparatus, system and methods includes any type of fluid. Also, herein, the term “liquid” may be used to indicate the exemplary embodiment, where the fluid is a liquid.

[0292] The term “evaporator condenser” is used herein to refer to an apparatus that is a combination evaporator and condenser. Thus, a structure is referred to as an evaporator condenser where the structure itself serves as both. The evaporator condenser structure is referred to herein as an evaporator/condenser, evaporator condenser or evaporator and condenser. Further, in some instances, where either the evaporator or the condenser is being referred to individually, it should be understood that the term is not limiting and refers to the evaporator condenser structure.

[0293] The term “unclean water” is used herein to refer to any water wherein it is desired to make cleaner prior to consuming the water.

[0294] The term “cleaner water” is used herein to refer to water that is cleaner as product water than as source water.

[0295] The term “source water” refers to any water that enters the apparatus.

[0296] The term “product water” refers to the cleaner water that exits the apparatus.

[0297] The term “purifying” as used herein, and in any appended claims, refers to reducing the concentration of one or more contaminants or otherwise altering the concentration of one or more contaminants.

[0298] The term “specified levels” as used herein refers to some desired level of concentration, as established by a user for a particular application. One instance of a specified level may be limiting a contaminant level in a fluid to carry out an industrial or commercial process. An example is eliminating contaminant levels in solvents or reactants to a level acceptable to enable an industrially significant yield in a chemical reaction (e.g., polymerization). Another instance of a specified level may be a certain contaminant level in a fluid as set forth by a governmental or intergovernmental agency for safety or health reasons. Examples might include the concentration of one or more contaminants in water to be used for drinking or particular health or medical applications, the concentration levels being set forth by organizations such as the World Health Organization or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

[0299] The term “system” as used herein may refer to any combination of elements, including but not limited to, a water vapor distillation apparatus (which may be referred to as a water system or a water vapor distillation system) and a water vapor distillation apparatus together with a power source, such as a Stirling engine.

[0300] Herein is disclosed an apparatus for distilling unclean water known as source water into cleaner water known as product water. The apparatus cleanses the source water by evaporating the water to separate the particulate from the source water. The term “purifying” as used herein, and in any appended claims, refers to substantially reducing the concentration of one or more contaminants to less than or equal to specified levels or otherwise substantially altering the concentration of one or more contaminants to within a specified range.

[0301] The source water may first pass through a counter flow tube-in-tube heat exchanger to increase the temperature of the water. Increasing the temperature of the source water reduces the amount of thermal energy required to evaporate the water within the evaporator/condenser. The source water may receive thermal energy from the other fluid streams present in the heat exchanger. Typically, these other streams have a higher temperature than the source water motivating thermal energy to flow from the higher temperature streams to the lower temperature source water.

[0302] Receiving the heated source water is the evaporator area of the evaporator/condenser assembly. This assembly evaporates the source water to separate the contaminants from the water. Thermal energy may be supplied using a heating element and high-pressure steam. Typically, the heating element will be used during initial start-up, thus under normal operating conditions the thermal energy will be provided by the high-pressure steam. The source water fills the inner tubes of the evaporator area of the evaporator/condenser. When the high-pressure steam condenses on the outer surfaces of these tubes thermal energy is conducted to the source water. This thermal energy causes some of the source water to evaporate into low-pressure steam. After the source water transforms into a low-pressure steam, the steam may exit the outlet of the tubes and pass through a separator. The separator removes any remaining water droplets within the steam ensuring that the low-pressure steam is dry before entering the compressor.

[0303] Upon exiting the evaporator area of the evaporator/condenser the low-pressure steam enters a compressor. The compressor creates high-pressure steam by compressing the low-pressure steam. As the steam is compressed the temperature of the steam increases. With the steam at an elevated temperature and pressure the steam exits the compressor.

[0304] The high-pressure steam enters the condenser area of the evaporator/condenser. As the steam fills the internal cavity the steam condenses on the tubes contained within the cavity. The high-pressure steam transfers thermal energy to the source water within the tubes. This heat transfer causes the steam to condense upon the outer surface of the tubes creating product water. The product water is collected in the base of the condenser area of the evaporator/condenser. The product water leaves the evaporator area of the evaporator/condenser and enters the level sensor housing.

[0305] The level sensor housing contains level sensors for determining the amount of product and blowdown water within the apparatus. These sensors allow an operator to adjust the amount of product water being produced or the amount of incoming source water depending on the water levels within the apparatus.

[0306] The water vapor distillation apparatus as described herein with respect to various embodiments may further be used in conjunction with a Stirling engine to form a water vapor distillation system. The power needed by the water

vapor distillation apparatus may be provided by a Stirling engine electrically connected to the water vapor distillation apparatus.

[0307] Referring to FIG. 1, one embodiment of the water vapor distillation apparatus 100 is shown. For the purposes of this description, the embodiment shown in FIG. 1 will be referred to as the exemplary embodiment. Other embodiments are contemplated some of which will be discussed herein. The apparatus 100 may include a heat exchanger 102, evaporator/condenser assembly 104, regenerative blower 106, level sensor assembly 108, a bearing feed-water pump 110, and a frame 112. See also FIGS. 1A-E for additional views and cross sections of the water vapor distillation apparatus 100.

[0308] Referring to FIGS. 1F-H, these figures illustrate alternate embodiments of the water vapor distillation apparatus 100. FIG. 1F depicts an apparatus 120 having an alternate configuration of the evaporator/condenser assembly 122. Similarly, FIG. 1G discloses an apparatus having another configuration of the evaporator/condenser assembly 132. Similarly, FIG. 1H illustrates another embodiment of the apparatus not including the level sensor assembly 108 and bearing feed-water pump 110 from FIGS. 1-1E.

Heat Exchanger

[0309] Referring now to FIGS. 2-2A, in the exemplary embodiment of the water vapor distillation apparatus, the heat exchanger may be a counter flow tube-in-tube heat exchanger assembly 200. In this embodiment, heat exchanger assembly 200 may include an outer tube 202, a plurality of inner tubes 204 and a pair of connectors 206 illustrated in FIG. 2A. Alternate embodiments of the heat exchanger assembly 200 may not include connectors 206.

[0310] Still referring to FIGS. 2-2A, the heat exchanger assembly 200 may contain several independent fluid paths. In the exemplary embodiment, the outer tube 202 contains source water and four inner tubes 204. Three of these inner tubes 204 may contain product water created by the apparatus. The fourth inner tube may contain blowdown water.

[0311] Still referring to FIGS. 2-2A, the heat exchanger assembly 200 increases the temperature of the incoming source water and reduces the temperature of the outgoing product water. As the source water contacts the outer surface of the inner tubes 204, thermal energy is conducted from the higher temperature blowdown and product water to the lower temperature source water through the wall of the inner tubes 204. Increasing the temperature of the source water improves the efficiency of the water vapor distillation apparatus 100 because source water having a higher temperature requires less energy to evaporate the water. Moreover, reducing the temperature of the product water prepares the water for use by the consumer.

[0312] Still referring to FIGS. 2-2A, in the exemplary embodiment the heat exchanger 200 is a tube-in-tube heat exchanger having an outer tube 202 having several functions. First, the outer tube 202 protects and contains the inner tubes 204. The outer tube 202 protects the inner tubes 204 from corrosion by acting as a barrier between the inner tubes 204 and the surrounding environment. In addition, the outer tube 202 also improves the efficiency of the heat exchanger 200 by preventing the exchange of thermal energy to the surrounding environment. The outer tube 202 insulates the inner tubes 204 reducing any heat transfer to or from the surrounding environment. Similarly, the outer tube 202 may resist heat transfer

from the inner tubes **204** focusing the heat transfer towards the source water and improving the efficiency of the heat exchanger **200**.

[0313] Still referring to FIGS. 2-2A, the outer tube **202** may be manufactured from any material, but low thermal conductivity is desirable. The low thermal conductivity is important, because the outer tube **202** insulates the inner tubes **204** from the surrounding environment. The low thermal conductivity of the outer tube improves the efficiency of the heat exchanger, because a low thermal conductive material reduces thermal energy losses or gains to the surrounding environment. In addition, low thermal conductive material lowers the amount of thermal energy that may be transferred from the inner tubes **204** to the outer tube **202**. This resistance to heat transfer allows more thermal energy to be transferred to the source water rather than escaping from the apparatus through the outer tube **202**. Thus an outer tube **202** manufactured from a material having a low thermal conductivity allows more thermal energy to be transferred to the source water rather than lost or gained to the surrounding environment.

[0314] Still referring to FIGS. 2-2A, in the exemplary embodiment the outer tube **202** is manufactured from a clear silicone. In addition to having a low thermal conductivity, silicone material is also corrosion resistant. This is an important characteristic to prevent corrosion of the heat exchanger **200**. The source water within the outer tube **202** may contain chemicals and/or other highly reactive materials. These materials may cause outer tubing **202** made from other materials to breakdown reducing the service life of the heat exchanger **200**. In alternate embodiments, the outer tube **202** may be manufactured from other materials, such as plastic or rubber having high temperatures resistance. Also, in one embodiment the outer tube **202** is made from convoluted tubing to enhance mixing, which increases heat transfer efficiency.

[0315] Referring now to FIGS. 2B-C, another desirable characteristic is for the outer tubing **202** to be sufficiently elastic to support installation of the heat exchanger **200** within the water vapor distillation apparatus **100**. In some applications space for the distillation apparatus may be limited by other environmental or situational constraints. For example, in the exemplary embodiment the heat exchanger **200** is wrapped around the evaporator/condenser. In other embodiments, the heat exchanger may also be integrated into the insulated cover of the water vapor distillation apparatus to minimize heat lost or gained from the environment. In the exemplary embodiment the heat exchanger **200** is configured in a coil as shown in FIGS. 2B-C. To achieve this configuration the inner tubes **204** are slid into the outer tube **202** and then wound around a mandrel. An elastic outer tube **202** assists with positioning the ends of the heat exchanger **200** at particular locations within the apparatus. Thus, having an elastic outer tube **202** may facilitate in the installation of the heat exchanger **200** within the water vapor distillation apparatus **100**.

[0316] Still referring to FIGS. 2B-C, the elasticity of the outer tubing **202** material may also be affected by the wall thickness. Tubing having a thick wall thickness has less flexibility. The thicker wall thickness, however, may improve the thermal characteristics of the tubing, because the thicker wall has greater resistance heat transfer. In addition, the wall thickness of the tubing must be sufficient to withstand the internal pressures generated by the source water within the tubing. Tubing having an increased wall thickness, however, has

decreased elasticity and increases the size of the heat exchanger assembly. Thicker walled tubing requires a larger bend radius affecting the installation the heat exchanger **200**. Conversely, tubing having too little wall thickness tends to kink during installation. This distortion of the tubing may restrict the flow of source water through the outer tube **202** causing a reduction in the efficiency of the heat exchanger **200**.

[0317] The diameter of the outer tube **202** may be any diameter capable of containing a plurality of inner tubes **204**. The larger the diameter, however, lowers the flexibility of the tubing. Any reduction in flexibility may adversely affect the installation of the heat exchanger into the water vapor distillation apparatus **100**. In the exemplary embodiment, the diameter of the outer tube **202** is one inch. This diameter allows the tube-in-tube heat exchanger **200** to be wrapped around the evaporator/condenser **104** upon final installation and contains four inner tubes **204** for transporting product and blowdown water. In alternate embodiments the heat exchanger may have as few as two inner tubes **204**. Similarly, in other embodiments the heat exchanger may have more than four inner tubes **204**.

[0318] Now referring to FIGS. 2A and 2D, the inner tubes **204** may provide separate flow paths for the source, product, and blowdown water. In the exemplary embodiment, these tubes contain product and blowdown water. However, in other embodiments, the inner tubes may contain additional fluid streams. The inner tubes **204** separate the clean and safe product water from the contaminated and unhealthy source and blowdown water. In the exemplary embodiment, there are three inner tubes **204** for product water and one inner tube **204** for blowdown. The source water travels within the outer tube **202** of the heat exchanger **200**. In various other embodiments, the number of inner tubes may vary, i.e., greater number of inner tubes may be included or a lesser number of inner tubes may be included.

[0319] Still referring to FIGS. 2A and 2D, the inner tubes **204** conduct thermal energy through the tube walls. Thermal energy flows from the high temperature product and blowdown water within the inner tubes **204** through the tube walls to the low temperature source water. Thus, the inner tubes **204** are preferably made from a material having a high thermal conductivity, and additionally, preferably from a material that is corrosion resistant. In the exemplary embodiment, the inner tubes **204** are manufactured from copper. The inner tubes **204** may be manufactured from other materials such as brass or titanium with preference that these other materials have the properties of high thermal conductivity and corrosion resistance. For applications where the source and blowdown water may be highly concentrated, such as sea water, the inner tubes **204** may be manufactured from but not limited to copper-nickel, titanium or thermally conductive plastics.

[0320] In addition to the tubing material, the diameter and thickness of the tubing may also affect the rate of thermal energy transfer. Inner tubing **204** having a greater wall thickness may have less thermal efficiency because increasing the wall thickness of the tubing may also increase the resistance to heat transfer. In the exemplary embodiment, the inner tubes **204** have 0.25 inch outside diameter. Although a thinner wall thickness increases the rate of heat transfer, the wall thickness must be sufficient to be shaped or formed without distorting. Thinner walled tubing is more likely to kink, pinch or collapse during formation. In addition, the wall thickness of the inner

tubes **204** must be sufficient to withstand the internal pressure created by the water passing through the tubes.

[0321] Still referring to FIGS. 2A and 2D, additional methods for improving the rate of heat transfer of the inner tubes **204** may include unequal inner tube diameters and extended surfaces on the inner tubes to enhance heat transfer (fins, pins, ribs . . .). In addition, the outer tube **202** may have a textured interior surface causing turbulence in the flow of the source water to enhance heat transfer. The rate of heat transfer is increased because the texture surface produces a turbulent flow within the tube **202**. The turbulence increases the amount of water that contacts the outer surfaces of the inner tubes **204** where the heat transfer occurs. In contrast, without a texture surface the water may flow in a more laminar manner. This laminar flow will allow only a limited amount of water to contact the outer surfaces of the inner tubes **204**. The remaining water not in contact with the inner tubes **204** receives less thermal energy because the convective thermal transfer between the water near the inner tubes and the remaining water is not as efficient as the heat transfer near the outer surface of the inner tubes **204**. Some examples of textured surfaces may include but are not limited to dimples, fins, bumps or grooves. In another embodiment may shrink to fit outer tube to increase shell side flow velocity and therefore enhance heat transfer.

[0322] Referring now to FIG. 2E, typically, the inner tubes **204** are positioned parallel to one another. In some embodiments, however, the inner tubes **204** are braided or twined together to form a helix or a substantially helical shape as illustrated in FIGS. 2F-G. The helix shape increases the amount of surface area for heat transfer, because the length of the inner tubes **204** is longer than inner tubes **204** of the parallel arrangement. The increased surface area provides more area for heat transfer, thus increasing the efficiency of the heat exchanger **200**. In addition, the helical shape may cause a turbulent flow of source water within the outer tubing **202** improving the heat transfer efficiency as previously described. In the exemplary embodiment, the heat exchanger **200** has four inner tubes **204** arranged in a helical shape illustrated in FIGS. 2H-I.

[0323] The total length of the tubes-in-tube heat exchanger **200** is governed by the desired efficiency of the apparatus. A heat exchanger **200** having a longer length yields better efficiency. In the exemplary embodiment, the heat exchanger **200** is approximately 50 feet long. This yields approximately 90% efficiency. Alternatively, a length of 25 feet yields an efficiency of approximately 84%.

[0324] Referring now to FIGS. 2, 2J, and 2K the heat exchanger assembly **200** may also include a connector **206** at either end of the heat exchanger **200**. In the exemplary embodiment, the heat exchanger **200** has two connectors located at either end of the assembly. These connectors **206** along with the outer tube **202** define an inner cavity for containing the source water. In addition, the connectors attach to the ends of the inner tubes **204** and provide separate fluid paths for the product and blowdown water to enter and/or exit the heat exchanger **200**. The connectors **206** allow the heat exchanger assembly to be mechanically connected to the evaporator/condenser and other apparatus components. In some embodiments an extension **207** may be included within the heat exchanger **200** to provide an additional port to remove or supply water to the heat exchanger **200**.

[0325] Referring now to FIGS. 2L-O, these figures illustrate an alternate embodiment of the heat exchanger **200**

having three inner tubes **204** passing through connectors **208**. The connectors **208** are sealed and attached to the inner tubes **204** and the outer tube **202** at either end of the heat exchanger **200** to contain the source water inside the outer tube **202**. An o-ring may be installed within the connectors **208** to seal the interface between the connector **208** and the inner tubes **204**. This type seal may allow the inner tubes **204** to move freely and independently of the connector **208**. Furthermore, the inner tubes **204** may be arranged in a helical shape as shown in FIG. 2N.

[0326] Referring to FIGS. 2P-R, these figures illustrate an alternate embodiment for the heat exchanger **210**. In this embodiment, the heat exchanger **210** is a plate heat exchanger having metal plates **212** and plastic plates **214**. The metal plates **212** may be manufacture from any metallic materials, such as stainless steel. Other embodiments may include but are not limited to plates manufactured from titanium or metal alloy. The plastic plates **214** are made from any type of plastic capable of performing. In one embodiment, the plate heat exchanger **210** is made from alternately metal and plastic plates. In other embodiments metal plates **212** may be followed by two or more plastic plates **214** as illustrated in FIG. 2R. The plate heat exchanger **210** may begin and/or end with a plate **216** manufacture from the same or different material as the previous plate. In alternate embodiments, plate **216** may be manufactured from a metallic or plastic material. The metal plates **212** consist of two metal plates stacked onto one another creating channels for fluid flow as shown in FIG. 2R.

[0327] Referring now to FIG. 3, the exemplary embodiment of the counter flow tube-in-tube heat exchanger **200** may include a fitting assembly **300**. The fitting assembly supports installation of the heat exchanger **200** within the water vapor distillation apparatus **100**. In addition, the fitting assembly **300** allows the heat exchanger **200** to be easily disconnected from the apparatus for maintenance. The assembly may consist of a first connector **302** (Also identified as connector **206** of FIG. 2) and a second connector **310** shown on FIG. 3. See also, FIGS. 3A-B for cross-section views of the fitting assembly **300**.

[0328] Still referring to FIG. 3, in the exemplary embodiment of the fitting assembly **300** is manufactured from brass. Other materials may be used to manufacture the fitting assembly **300** including, but are not limited to stainless steel, plastic, copper, copper nickel or titanium. For installation purposes, having the fitting assembly manufactured from similar material as the tubing that attaches to the assembly is preferred. Similar materials allow for the assembly to be installed within the water vapor distillation apparatus using a soldering or welding technique. The fitting assembly **300** is preferably manufactured from materials that are corrosion resistant and heat resistant (250° F.). In addition, the materials preferably allows for a fluid tight connection when the assembly is installed. For applications where the source and blowdown water may be highly concentrated, such as sea water, the fitting assembly **300** may be manufactured from but not limited to copper-nickel or titanium.

[0329] Still referring to FIG. 3, the first connector **302** includes a first end **304** and a second end **306**. The first end **304** attaches to the heat exchanger **200** as shown in FIGS. 2-2A. The connector may be attached to the heat exchanger **200** by clamping the outer tube **202** using a hose clamp against the outer surface of the first end **304** of the connector **302**. The inner tubes **204** of the heat exchanger **200** may also connect to the connector **302** at the first end **304**. These tubes

may be soldered to the heat exchanger side of the connector **302**. Other methods of attachment may include, but are not limited to welding, press fitting, mechanical clamping or insert molding. See also FIGS. 3A-3B for cross-section views of fitting assembly **300**.

[0330] Now referring to FIG. 3C, in this embodiment the first end **304** of the connector **302** may have five ports. Three ports may be in fluid connection with one another as shown on FIGS. 3D-E. This configuration may combine multiple streams of product water into one stream. Multiple streams of product water increases the amount of heat transfer from the product water to the source water, because there is more product water within the heat exchanger to provide thermal energy to the source water. The remaining ports are separate and provide fluid pathways for blowdown and source water illustrated in FIGS. 3E-F. Alternate embodiments may not have any ports in fluid connection with one another.

[0331] Still referring to FIG. 3C, connector **302** has a second end **306** for mating with the second connector **310**. This second end **306** may have three ports providing flow paths for product, source and blowdown water. The product flow path may include an extension **308**. The extension **308** supports assembling connectors **302** and **310** together because the extension **308** allows for the o-ring groove within the body of the second connector **310** rather than on the mating surface **310**. Having the o-ring groove within the body of the second connector **310** allows the flow paths through the connector assembly to be positioned near one another without having overlapping sealing areas.

[0332] Now referring to FIGS. 3G-H, the second connector **310** includes a first end **312** and a second end **314**. The first end **312** mates with the first connector **302** as shown on FIG. 3. This end may also include an extension **316** as shown in FIG. 3G. The extension **316** allows for the o-ring groove to be located within the body of the first connector **302** rather than within the surface of end **306** of the first connector **302**. In addition, this connector may have a leak path **318** on the first end **312**. This path is located around the port for the product water to prevent source or blowdown water from entering the product stream. Blowdown and source water may contain contaminants that affect the quality and safety of the product water. The leak path allows the blowdown and source water to leave the fitting rather than entering the product stream through a drain **320** illustrated on FIGS. 3G-I. In addition to the drain **320**, the exemplary embodiment may include three independent fluid paths within the connector **310** illustrated on FIGS. 3I-J. The first connector **302** may be assembled to the second connector **310** using a Marmon clamp to allow for serviceability of the apparatus. This type of clamp provides an even clamping force and ease of disassembly/reassembly of the connection. Other methods of assembling the connectors together include, but are not limited to using a C-clamp or fasteners (i.e. bolts and nuts). In addition, the circumference of the connectors **302** and **310** may be tapered, as shown on FIGS. 3E-F and 3I-J, to receive the clamp during installation of the fitting assembly **300**. In other embodiments, the fitting assembly **300** may be permanently joined by welding or soldering the connectors together.

Evaporator Condenser

[0333] Now referring to FIGS. 4-4B, the exemplary embodiment of the evaporator condenser (also herein referred to as an "evaporator/condenser") assembly **400** may consist of an evaporator/condenser chamber **402** having a top and

bottom. The chamber **402** may include a shell **410**, an upper tube sheet **414** and a lower tube sheet **412**. Attached to the lower tube sheet **412** is a sump assembly **404** for holding incoming source water. Similarly, attached to the upper tube sheet **414** is an upper flange **406**. This flange connects the steam chest **408** to the evaporator/condenser chamber **402**. Within the evaporator/condenser chamber **402** are a plurality of rods **416** where each rod is surrounded by a tube **418** as illustrated in FIGS. 4A and 4B. The tubes **418** are in fluid connection with the sump **404** and upper flange **406**. See also FIG. 4C illustrating an alternate embodiment of the evaporator/condenser assembly **420**.

[0334] Now referring to FIG. 5, the sump assembly **500** (also identified as **404** on FIG. 4) may include an upper housing **502**, a lower housing **504**, a drain fitting **506**, drain pipe **508**, and heating element **510**. See also FIG. 5A for an exploded view of the sump assembly **500** and FIG. 6 for detailed view of the upper housing **502**. The sump assembly **500** contains and heats source water, as well as collects particulate carried by the source water. When the source water changes state from a fluid to a vapor particulate is left behind and is collected in the sump assembly **500**.

[0335] Still referring to FIGS. 5-5A, the sump assembly **500** may be made from material that is corrosion and high-temperature resistant. A corrosion resistant material is preferred because the sump is exposed to high temperatures, moisture, and corrosive source water. In the exemplary embodiment the sump is manufactured from stainless steel. In an alternate embodiment the sump may be manufactured from RADEL® or other high-temperature plastic in conjunction with an alternate configuration for attaching the heating element **510**. For applications where the source water may be highly concentrated, such as sea water, the sump assembly **500** may be manufactured from but not limited to titanium, copper-nickel, naval bronze, or high-temperature plastic.

[0336] Still referring to FIGS. 5-5A, the source water may be heated using a heating element **510** of the sump assembly **500**. The heat element **510** increases the temperature of the source water during initial start up of the water vapor distillation apparatus **100**. This element provides additional thermal energy causing the source water to change from a fluid to a vapor. In the exemplary embodiment, the heat element **510** may be a 120 Volt/1200 Watt resistive element electric heater.

[0337] Still referring to FIGS. 5-5A, the sump assembly **500** may include a bottom housing **504** having an angled lower surface in order to assist with the collection of particulate. The bottom housing **504** may have any angle sufficient to collect the particulate in one area of the housing. In the exemplary embodiment the bottom housing **504** has a 17 degree angled-lower surface. In other embodiments, the bottom housing **504** may have a flat bottom.

[0338] Still referring to FIGS. 5-5A, the exemplary embodiment may include a drain assembly consisting of a drain fitting **506** and a drain pipe **508**. The drain assembly provides access to inside of the evaporator area of the evaporator/condenser to remove particulate buildup without having to disassemble the apparatus. The drain assembly may be located near the bottom of the sump to reduce scaling (buildup of particulates) on the tubes inside the evaporator/condenser. Scaling is prevented by allowing periodic removal of the scale in the sump assembly **500**. Having less particulate in the sump assembly **500** reduces the likelihood that particulate will flow into the tubes of the evaporator/condenser. In the exemplary embodiment the drain assembly is positioned to

receive particulate from the angled-lower surface of the bottom housing 504. The drain assembly may be made of any material that may be attached to the bottom housing 504 and is corrosion and heat resistant. In the exemplary embodiment, the drain fitting 506 is a flanged sanitary fitting manufactured from stainless steel.

[0339] Still referring to FIGS. 5-5A, attached to the drain fitting 506 may be a drain pipe 508. The drain pipe 508 provides a fluid path way for particulate to travel from the drain fitting 506 out of the evaporator/condenser assembly 400. The drain pipe 508 may be manufactured from any material, with preference that the material is corrosion and heat resistant and is capable of being attached to the drain fitting 506. In the exemplary embodiment, the drain pipe 508 is manufactured from stainless steel. The diameter of the drain pipe 508 is preferably sufficient to allow for removal of particulate from the sump assembly 500. A larger diameter pipe is desirable because there is a less likelihood of the drain pipe 508 becoming clogged with particulate while draining the sump assembly 500.

[0340] Now referring to FIG. 7, the exemplary embodiment of the evaporator/condenser chamber 700 (also identified as 402 of FIG. 4) may include a shell 702 (also identified as 410 of FIGS. 4A-B, a lower flange 704 (also identified as 502 of FIG. 5 and 600 of FIG. 6), a lower-tube sheet 706 (also identified as 412 of FIGS. 4A-B), a plurality of tie rods 708, a plurality of tubes 710 (also identified as 418 of FIGS. 4A-B), an upper flange 712 (also identified as 406 of FIG. 4) and an upper-tube sheet 714 (also identified as 414 of FIGS. 4A-B). See also FIG. 7A for an assembly view evaporator/condenser chamber 700.

[0341] Still referring to FIG. 7, the shell 702 defines an internal cavity where thermal energy is transferred from the high-pressure steam to the source water. This heat transfer supports the phase change of the source water from a fluid to a vapor. In addition, the heat transfer also causes the incoming steam to condense into product water. The shell 702 may be manufactured from any material that has sufficient corrosion resistant and strength characteristics. In the exemplary embodiment, the shell 702 is manufactured from fiberglass. It is preferable that the shell has an inner diameter sufficient to contain the desired number of tubes 710. Within the internal cavity of the shell is a plurality of tubes 710 having surface area for transferring thermal energy from the high-pressure steam entering the chamber to source water within the tubes 710.

[0342] Still referring to FIG. 7, the evaporator/condenser chamber 700 defines an inner cavity for the condensation of high-pressure steam. Within this cavity is a plurality of tubes 710 that transfer thermal energy from high-pressure steam to source water within the tubes as the steam condensing upon outer surfaces of the tubes. The heat transfer through the tube walls causes the source water to undergo a phase change through a process called thin film evaporation as described in U.S. Patent Application Pub. No. US 2005/0183832 A1 published on Aug. 25, 2005 entitled "Method and Apparatus for Phase Change Enhancement," the contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference herein.

[0343] Still referring to FIG. 7, in the tubes 710 of the evaporator/condenser, a Taylor bubble may be developed which has an outer surface including a thin film in contact with an inner surface of the tubes 710. The Taylor bubble is heated as it rises within the tube so that fluid in the thin film transitions into vapor within the bubble.

[0344] Now referring to FIG. 7B, typically an evaporator may operate in either of two modes: pool boiling mode or thin film mode. In thin film boiling, a thin film of fluid is created on the inner wall of the tubes facilitating heat transfer from the tube wall to the free surface of the fluid. The efficiency of phase change typically increases for thin film mode as compared to pool boiling mode. FIG. 7B shows the difference in the rate of distillate production as a function of condenser pressure for pool boiling and thin film boiling under similar conditions for a representative evaporator. The bottom curve 70 corresponds to pool boiling while the middle curve 75 corresponds to thin film boiling. As will be noted from these two curves, thin film boiling mode offers significantly higher efficiency than pool boiling mode. Thin film boiling is more difficult to maintain than pool boiling, however. Thin film evaporation is typically achieved using apparatus that includes very small openings. This apparatus may easily clog, particularly when the source fluid contains contaminants. Additionally, in thin film mode the water level is typically held just marginally above the tops of the tubes in a vertical tube-type evaporator. For reasons such as this, the apparatus may also be sensitive to movement and positioning of the apparatus.

[0345] Referring back to FIG. 7, in the exemplary embodiment the tubes 710 have an outer diameter of 0.75 inches and may be manufactured from copper. In alternate embodiments, the tubes 710 may be manufactured from other materials including but not limited to nickel copper or other composite materials. In various other embodiments, the diameter of the tubes may differ, i.e., may be smaller or larger. For possible applications where the source water may be seawater, the tubes 710 may be manufactured from copper-nickel or titanium material. These materials have high corrosion resistant properties to maintain the heat transfer characteristics of the tubes when exposed to highly concentrated source water, such as, salt water. The diameter of the tubes 710 may also vary depending on many variables. The diameter of the tubes 710 may be limited by the inner diameter of the shell 702 and the desired amount of heat transfer efficiency. Another constraint may be serviceability. A smaller diameter is more difficult to remove scale from because the reduced diameter restricts access to the inner surfaces of the tube walls. The length of the tubes 710 may be determined by the length of the inner cavity defined by the shell 702 and the thickness of the tube sheets 706 and 714. In the exemplary embodiment the tubes 710 extend beyond the ends of the tube sheets into the lower flange 704 and upper flange 712.

[0346] Referring now to FIG. 8, in the exemplary embodiment the tubes 800 (also identified as 710 of FIG. 7A-B) have a bead 802 near each end. The bead 802 prevents the tubes 800 from sliding through the apertures in the lower tube sheet 706 and the upper tube sheet 714.

[0347] Referring now to FIG. 9, improved efficiency of a phase change operation may be achieved by providing packing within the evaporator/condenser tubes 904. The introduction of such packing may allow the evaporator to take on some of the characteristics of thin film mode, due to the interaction between the fluid, the packing and the tube 904. The packing may be any material shaped such that the material preferentially fills the volume of a tube 904 near the tube's longitudinal axis versus the volume near the tube's interior wall. Such packing material serves to concentrate the vapor near the walls of the tube for efficient heat exchange. For example, in the exemplary embodiment the packing may comprise a rod

902. Each rod **902** may be of any cross-sectional shape including a cylindrical or rectangular shape. The cross-sectional area of each packing rod **902** may be any area that will fit within the cross-section of the tube. The cross-sectional area of each rod **902** may vary along the rod's length. A given rod **902** may extend the length of a given evaporator tube **904** or any subset thereof. It is preferable that the rod material be hydrophobic and capable of repeated thermal cycling. In the exemplary embodiment the rods **902** are manufactured from glass fiber filled RYTON® or glass fiber filled polypropylene.

[0348] Still referring to FIG. 9, each rod **902** may be positioned anywhere within the tube **904** including preferentially in the upper portion of the tube. In one specific embodiment, each rod is approximately half the length of the associated tube and is positioned approximately in the top half of the tube. The top curve **80** in FIG. 7B shows the increase in boiling efficiency for thin film boiling for a representative evaporator where the evaporator tubes include packing material in approximately the top half of the tubes. With such packing, the phase change efficiency is also, advantageously, much less sensitive to changes in the fluid level above the tubes, the orientation of the tubes with respect to the vertical, the feed pressure for the tubes and other operating parameters for the evaporator. In the exemplary embodiment the rods **902** have approximately the same length as the tubes **904**.

[0349] Referring now to FIG. 9A, in the exemplary embodiment, the rods **902** may have a plurality of members **906** extending out from the center and along the longitudinal axis of the rod **902**. These members **906** maintain the rod **902** within the center of the tube **904** to produce the most efficient flow path for the source water. Any number of members may be used, however, it is preferential that there is a sufficient number to maintain the rod **902** in the center of the tube **904**. In alternate embodiments, the rods **902** may not have members **906**. In alternate embodiments the rod **902** may be held in place within the tube **904** by wrapping the rod **902** in a wire or cross drilling holes within the rod **902** to support installation of pins to position the rod **902** within the tube **904**.

[0350] Referring back to FIG. 7, the tubes **710** (Also identified as **800** of FIG. 8 and **904** of FIG. 9) are secured in place by the pair of tube sheets **706** and **714**. These sheets are secured to each end of the shell **702** using the tie rods **708**. The tube sheets **706** and **714** have a plurality of apertures that provide a pathway for the source water to enter and exit the tubes **710**. When the tubes **710** are installed within the chamber **700**, the apertures within the tube sheets **706** and **714** receive the ends of the tubes **710**. The lower tube sheet **706** (also identified as **1002** on FIG. 10) is attached to the bottom of the shell **702**. See FIG. 10 for a detail view of the lower tube sheet. The upper tube sheet **714** (also identified as **1004** on FIG. 10A) is attached to the top of the shell **702**. See FIG. 10A for a detail view of the upper tube sheet. Both tube sheets have similar dimensions except that the upper tube sheet **714** has an additional aperture located in the center of the sheet. This aperture provides an opening for the high-pressure steam to enter the evaporator/condenser chamber **700**.

[0351] Still referring to FIG. 7, in the exemplary embodiments the upper-tube sheet **714** and the lower-tube sheet **706** may be manufactured from RADEL®. This material has low creep, hydrolytic stability, thermal stability and low thermal conductivity. Furthermore, tube sheets manufactured from RADEL® may be formed by machining or injection molding.

In alternate embodiments, the tube sheets may be manufactured from other materials including but are not limited to G10.

[0352] Still referring to FIG. 7, the size of the plurality of apertures within the tube sheets **706** and **714** for receiving the tubes **710** is governed by the outside diameter of the tubes **710**. These apertures must be sufficient to receive the end of the tubes **710** and also include a seal. Typically, an o-ring groove is provided within the tube sheets to receive an o-ring. This o-ring provides a water-tight seal between the inner tubes **710** and the tube sheets **706** and **714**. In addition, this type of seal simplifies construction, facilitates the use of dissimilar materials within the evaporator/condenser, and allows the tubes **710** to move during repeated thermal cycles. This seal prevents the product water from entering into the sump **500** of FIG. 5 or source water entering the chamber **700**. In alternate embodiments, the tubes **710** may be installed within the apertures of the tube sheets **706** and **714** by the using the methods of, but not limited to soldering, welding, press fitting, bonding (i.e. silicone, RTV, epoxy . . .), brazing or swaging depending on the tube sheet material.

[0353] Now referring to FIG. 10, in the exemplary embodiment the o-ring grooves are located at various depths in the tube sheets **1002** and **1004**. The different depths of the o-ring grooves allows the tubes **710** to be positioned more closely together, because the o-ring grooves from adjacent tubes do not overlap one another. Overlapping o-ring grooves do not provide a sufficient seal, thus each o-ring groove must be independent of the other o-ring grooves within the tube sheet. As a result of varying the location of the o-ring grooves at different depths within the tube sheet, adjacent o-ring grooves do not overlap one another allowing the tubes to be positioned closer together. Thus having the tubes **710** located closer to one another allows more tubes to be positioned within die evaporator/condenser chamber **700**.

[0354] Referring back to FIG. 7, the tube sheets **706** and **714** are also secured to the lower flange **704** and the upper flange **712** using the tie rods **708**. The lower flange **704** (also identified as **502** of FIG. 5 and **600** of FIG. 6) connects the sump **500** of FIG. 5 to the evaporator/condenser chamber **700** of FIG. 7. In addition, the lower flange **704** provides a fluid connection for the source water within the sump to the inlet of tubes **710** positioned on the lower tube sheet **706**. The lower flange **704** may have any height with preference that the height is sufficient to allow for an even distribution of the source water entering the tubes **710**. Typically a flange having a height of one to two inches provides for an even distribution of source water into the tubes **710**. In alternate embodiments the height of the flange may be larger to increase the capacity of the sump to collect particulate.

[0355] Still referring to FIG. 7, the upper flange **712** (also identified as **1100** of FIG. 11) provides a fluid connection between the outlet of the tubes **710** and the steam chest **408** of FIG. 4. In addition, the upper flange **712** collects the source water removed from the low-pressure steam as the steam passes through the steam chest **408**. This water is then transferred out of the apparatus through the blowdown port **1102** located within the side of the upper flange **1100** of FIG. 11.

[0356] Still referring to FIG. 7, the lower flange **704** and upper flange **712** may be manufactured out of any material having sufficient structural strength and corrosion and temperature resistant properties. In one embodiment, the flanges may be manufactured from RADEL®. In the exemplary embodiment the flanges may be manufactured from nickel-

plated aluminum. In other embodiments the lower flange may be manufacture from material including but not limited to stainless steel, titanium and copper-nickel.

[0357] Referring to FIG. 7-7A, located near the outer edge of the lower flange **704** and the upper flange **712** is a plurality of apertures to receive the tie rods **708**. These rods are axially positioned on a bolt circle concentric to and along the outside perimeter of the shell **702**. The length of the tie rods **708** is governed by the length of the shell **702** and the thickness of the lower-tube sheet **706**, lower flange **704**, upper flange **712** and upper-tube sheet **714**. The tie rods **708** may have threaded ends for attaching a threaded fastener onto each end of the rod securing the components of the evaporator/condenser together. In addition, the tie rods **708** may be manufactured from any material that is of sufficient strength for the purpose, such as, stainless steel. Tie rods **708** may be manufactured from other materials including, but not limited to bronze, titanium, fiberglass composite materials, and carbon steel. In the exemplary embodiment, the tie rods **708** may have flats machined near each end to provide a flat surface for receiving a device to hold the rods in place during installation.

[0358] Referring now to FIGS. 12-12C, connected to the upper flange **1100** (also identified as **712** of FIG. 7) may be a steam chest **1200** (also identified as **408** in FIG. 4). In the exemplary embodiment, the steam chest **1200** may include a base **1202**, a steam separator assembly **1204**, a cap **1206** and a steam tube **1208**. The base **1202** defines an internal cavity for receiving the low-pressure steam created within the tubes **710** of the evaporator area of the evaporator/condenser chamber **700**. The base **1202** may have any height such that there is sufficient space to allow water droplets contained within the vapor to be separated. The height of the steam chest allows the water droplets carried by the steam and forcibly ejected from outlets of the tubes **710** from the rapid release of steam bubbles to decelerate and fall back towards the upper flange **712** (also identified as **1100** on FIG. 11).

[0359] Still referring to FIGS. 12-12C, within the base **1202** may be a steam separator assembly **1204**. This assembly consists of a basket and mesh (not shown in FIGS. 12-12C). The basket contains a quantity of wire mesh. In the exemplary embodiment, the steam separator assembly **1204** removes water droplets from the incoming low-pressure steam by manipulating the steam through a layer of wire mesh. As the steam passes through the mesh the water droplets start to collect on the surfaces of the mesh. These droplets may contain contaminants or particulate. As the droplets increase in size, the water falls onto the bottom of the basket. A plurality of apertures may be located in the bottom of the basket to allow water to collect within the upper flange **712**. In addition, these apertures provide a fluid path way for low-pressure steam to enter the steam separator assembly **1204**. In addition, the wire mesh provides a barrier from the splashing blowdown water located within the upper flange **712** of the evaporator/condenser.

[0360] Still referring to FIGS. 12-12C, in alternate embodiments the steam separator assembly **1204** may contain a series of plates for collecting the water droplets from the low-pressure water vapor as the vapor passes through or around each plate. The plates manipulate the steam to cause water droplets to collect onto the plates. The water is collected in the assembly because the plates are arranged creating sharp bends in the flow path of the steam. These bends reduce the velocity of and change the direction of the steam. The water droplet may continue along their initial trajectory due to

momentum. The droplets may then impact the walls or plates of the assembly where the droplets are collected. When enough droplets have collected on the walls or plates of the assembly, the water droplets may fall down towards the upper flange **406** of the evaporator/condenser.

[0361] Still referring to FIGS. 12-12C, the base **1202** may also have an observation window **1210**. This window allows people operating the apparatus to visually observe the internals of the steam chest to determine if the apparatus is functioning properly. In other embodiments, the steam chest **1200** may not include an observation window **1210**. This alternate embodiment is illustrated in FIG. 12D. In still other embodiments, the size and shape of the window may vary. In some embodiments, the steam chest may include multiple windows.

[0362] In the exemplary embodiment, the steam separator assembly may be manufactured from stainless steel. Other materials may be used, however, with preference that those materials have corrosion and high temperature resistant properties. Other types of materials may include, but are not limited to RADEL®, titanium, copper-nickel, plated aluminum, fiber composites, and high temperature plastics.

[0363] Still referring to FIGS. 12-12C, attached to the base **1202** is the cap **1206**. The cap and base define the internal cavity for separating the water from the low-pressure steam. In addition, the cap **1206** may have two ports, an outlet port **1211** and inlet port **1212** shown on FIGS. 12B, 12E and 12F. The outlet port provides a fluid path way for the dry low-pressure steam to exit the steam chest **1200**. In the exemplary embodiment, the outlet port **1211** is located near the top surface of the cap **1206** because the locating the port away from the outlets of the tubes **710** of the evaporator/condenser promotes dryer steam. In alternate embodiments, however, the outlet port **1211** may have a different location within the cap **1206**. Similarly, the inlet port **1212** provides a fluid path way for high-pressure steam to enter the high-pressure steam tube **1208** within the steam chest **1200**. In the exemplary embodiment, the inlet port **1212** is located near the top surface of the cap **1206**. In alternate embodiments, the inlet port **1212** may have a different location within the cap **1206**. In the exemplary embodiment, the cap **1206** is manufactured from plated aluminum. Other types of materials may include, but are not limited to stainless steel, plastics, titanium and copper-nickel. The size of these ports may affect the pressure drop across the compressor.

[0364] Still referring to FIGS. 12-12C, connected to the inlet port **1212** within the steam chest **1200** is a steam tube **1208**. This tube provides a fluid path way for the high-pressure steam to pass through the steam chest and enter the condenser area of the evaporator/condenser chamber. The inner diameter of the steam tube **1208** may be any size, such that the tube does not adversely affect the flow of high-pressure steam from the regenerative blower to the evaporator/condenser chamber. In the exemplary embodiment the steam tube **1208** may be manufactured from stainless steel. Other materials may be used to manufacture the steam tube **1208**, but these materials must have sufficient corrosion resistant and high temperature resistant properties. Such materials may include, but are not limited to plated aluminum, plastics, titanium and copper-nickel. For applications where the source water may be highly concentrated, such as sea water, the steam chest **1200** may be manufactured from but not limited to titanium, nickel, bronze, nickel-copper and copper-nickel.

[0365] Referring now to FIGS. 13-13C, an alternate embodiment of the evaporator/condenser assembly 1300 is shown. In this embodiment, the evaporator/condenser assembly 1300 includes a sump 1302, an evaporator/condenser chamber 1304, a mist eliminator assembly 1306, a plurality of tie rods 1308, a lower flange 1310 and an upper flange 1312. See FIG. 13D for a detail view of the evaporator/condenser assembly without the sump 1302.

[0366] Now referring to FIG. 13E, the evaporator/condenser chamber may include a shell 1314, a plurality of tubes 1316, a lower flange 1310 and an upper flange 1312. The evaporator/condenser chamber 1304 defines an inner cavity for the condensation of high-pressure steam. Tubes 1316 transfer thermal energy from the high-pressure steam to source water within the tubes when the steam condenses upon the outer surface of the tubes 1316. In this embodiment the tubes 1316 may have an outer diameter of 0.75 inches and manufactured from copper. In alternate embodiments, the tubes 1316 may be manufactured from other materials including but not limited to nickel copper or other composite materials. The diameter of the tubes 1316 may also vary depending on many variables. See previous discussion in the exemplary embodiment concerning the diameter of the tubes. The length of the tubes 1316 may be determined by the length of the inner cavity defined by the shell 1314 and the thickness of the lower flange 1310 and upper flange 1312.

[0367] Still referring to FIG. 13E, the tubes 1316 are supported within the inner cavity defined by the shell 1314 by the lower flange 1310 and upper flange 1312, as shown on FIGS. 13B, 13C and 13E. Each flange has a plurality of apertures located axially around the center of the flange. These apertures may contain the ends of the tubes 1316. In addition, the lower flange 1310 and upper flange 1312 also secure the shell 1314 in place and provide pathways to the sump 1302 and the mist eliminator assembly 1306. As the source water fills the sump 1302, some water begins to fill the tubes 1316 located in the inner cavity of the shell 1314. As thermal energy is transferred to the source water in the tubes 1316, the water begins to evaporate. The source water vapor travels through the tubes 1316 and into the mist eliminator assembly 1306. The vapor enters the mist eliminator through the apertures located in the upper flange 1312.

[0368] Still referring to FIG. 13E, the shell 1314 is secured to the lower flange 1310 and upper flange 1312 using a plurality of tie rods 1308. These tie rods are positioned outside axially around the perimeter of the shell 1314. In addition, the tie rods 1308 also secure the mist eliminator 1306 to the upper flange 1312 and the sump 1302 to the lower flange 1310. The length of the tie rods is governed by the length of the shell 1314 and the thickness of the lower flange 1310, upper flange 1312, sump 1302 and mist eliminator 1306. The tie rods 1308 may have threaded ends for attaching a threaded fastener onto each end of the rod securing the components of the evaporator/condenser together. In addition, the tie rods 1308 may be manufactured from any material that is of sufficient strength, such as, stainless steel. Tie rods 1308 may be manufactured from other materials including, but not limited to bronze, titanium, fiberglass composite materials, and carbon steel.

[0369] Still referring to FIG. 13E, in the exemplary embodiment the shell 1314 is manufactured from fiberglass. Other materials may be used with preference that those materials are corrosion resistant, have low thermal conductivity, and sufficient structural strength to withstand the internal pressures developed during the operation of the evaporator/

condenser assembly 1300. See discussion for the exemplary embodiment relating to the size of the inner diameter of the shell.

[0370] Still referring to FIG. 13E, the sump 1302 is connected to the lower flange 1310 and is in fluid connection with the tubes 1316 of the evaporator/condenser assembly chamber 1304. The sump 1302 collects the incoming source water from the heat exchanger. The source water enters the sump 1302 through an inlet port located within the side wall of the sump. In other embodiments the inlet port may be located at a different location (i.e. on the bottom). In this embodiment the sump 1302 is made from a composite material, G10 plastic. In other embodiments the sump 1302 may be manufactured from any other material having sufficient corrosion and high-temperatures resistant properties. Other materials include but are not limited to aluminum RADEL® and stainless steel. The sump 1302 may also include a heating element to provide thermal energy to the source water. This thermal energy assists the source water in changing from a fluid to a vapor.

[0371] Referring now to FIGS. 14-14C, attached to the upper flange 1312 is the mist eliminator assembly 1400 (also identified as 1306 of FIG. 13). This assembly may consist of a cap 1402, steam pipe 1404, and mist separator 1406 illustrated on FIG. 14. The cap 1402 contains the low-pressure steam that is created from the evaporator side of the evaporator/condenser. The cap 1402 may have three ports 1408, 1410, and 1412 as shown FIGS. 14A-C. See discussion for the steam chest of the exemplary embodiment relating to the height of the volume for removing the water droplets. In addition, the cap 1402 defines a cavity that contains the mist separator 1406 shown on FIGS. 14, 14C and 14D.

[0372] Still referring to FIGS. 14-14C, the first port 1408 may be located in the center of the top surface of the cap 1402 and is for receiving the first end of the steam pipe 1404. This port allows the high-pressure steam created by the compressor to re-enter the evaporator/condenser through first end of the steam pipe 1404. The steam pipe 1404 provides a fluid path way for high-pressure steam to enter the evaporator/condenser through the mist eliminator assembly 1400 without mixing with the low-pressure steam entering the mist eliminator assembly 1400. In this embodiment, the steam pipe 1404 is manufactured from stainless steel. In other embodiments the steam pipe may be manufactured from materials including, but not limited to plated aluminum, RADEL®, copper-nickel and titanium. The length of the steam pipe 1404 must be sufficient to allow for connecting with the compressor and passing through the entire mist eliminator assembly 1400. The second end of the steam pipe is received within a port located at the center of the upper flange 1312. The inner diameter of the steam pipe 1404 may affect the pressure drop across the compressor. Another effect on the system is that the steam pipe 1404 reduces the effective volume within the mist eliminator to remove water droplets from the low-pressure steam.

[0373] Still referring to FIGS. 14-14C, the steam pipe 1404 also may have a plurality of exterior grooves for receiving the mist separator 1406. The mist separator 1406 is circular plate having an aperture. This aperture allows the low-pressure steam to pass through the plate. In one embodiment a plurality of mist separators are installed within the grooves of the steam pipe 1404. These plates would be oriented such that the aperture is located 180° from the preceding plate. In addition, the plate nearest to the outlet port 1410 would be orientated

such that the aperture was 180° from the port. In alternate embodiments the plates may include grooves on the top surface of the plates to collect water droplets. These grooves may be tapered to allow the collected water to flow off the plate and fall down towards the base of the mist eliminator assembly 1400. The mist separator 1406 may be secured to the steam pipe 1404 using a pair of snap rings and a wave washer.

[0374] Still referring to FIGS. 14-14C, the second port 1410 may be located also in the top surface of the cap 1402 and allows the dry low-pressure steam to exit the mist eliminator assembly 1400. See previous discussion for the exemplary embodiment concerning the size and location of the outlet port.

[0375] Still referring to FIGS. 14-14C, the third port 1412 may be located within the side wall of the cap 1402. This port allows water removed from the low-pressure steam to exit the apparatus. The location of the port is preferably at a height where the blowdown water may exit the mist eliminator assembly 1400 without an excessive buildup of blowdown water within the assembly. In addition, the height of the port preferably is not too low, but rather preferably is sufficient to maintain a level of blowdown water covering the outlets of the tubes. In the exemplary embodiment, a tube may be connected to port 1412 and the blowdown water may pass through a level sensor housing 108 and heat exchanger 102 before exiting the apparatus 100.

[0376] Still referring to FIGS. 14-14C, the mist eliminator assembly 1400 may be manufactured from any material having sufficient corrosion and high temperature resistant properties. In this embodiment, the mist eliminator assembly is manufactured from stainless steel. The assembly may be manufactured from other materials including but not limited to RADEL®, stainless steel, titanium, and copper-nickel.

Compressor

[0377] The water vapor distillation apparatus 100 may include a compressor 106. In the exemplary embodiment the compressor is a regenerative blower. Other types of compressors may be implemented, but for purposes of this application a regenerative blower is depicted and is described with reference to the exemplary embodiment. The purpose of the regenerative blower is to compress the low-pressure steam exiting the evaporator area of the evaporator/condenser to create high-pressure steam. Increasing the pressure of the steam raises the temperature of the steam. This increase in temperature is desirable because when the high-pressure steam condenses on the tubes of the condenser area of the evaporator/condenser the thermal energy is transferred to the incoming source water. This heat transfer is important because the thermal energy transferred from the high-pressure steam supplies low-pressure steam to the regenerative blower.

[0378] The change in pressure between the low-pressure steam and the high-pressure steam is governed by the desired output of product water. The output of the product water is related to the flow rate of the high-pressure steam. If the flow rate of steam for the high-pressure steam from the compressor to the condenser area of the evaporator/condenser is greater than the ability of the condenser to receive the steam then the steam may become superheated. Conversely, if the evaporator side of the evaporator/condenser produces more steam than the compressor is capable of compressing then the condenser side of the evaporator/condenser may not be operating at full capacity because of the limited flow-rate of high-pressure steam from the compressor.

[0379] Referring now to FIGS. 15-15G, the exemplary embodiment may include a regenerative blower assembly 1500 for compressing the low-pressure steam from the evaporator area of the evaporator/condenser. The regenerative blower assembly 1500 includes an upper housing 1502 and a lower housing 1504 defining an internal cavity as illustrated in FIG. 15C. See FIGS. 15D-G for detail views of the upper housing 1502 and lower housing 1504. Located in the internal cavity defined by the upper housing 1502 and lower housing 1504 is an impeller assembly 1506. The housings may be manufactured from a variety of plastics including but not limited to RYTON®, ULTEM®, or Polysulfone. Alternatively, the housings may be manufactured from materials including but not limited to titanium, copper-nickel, and aluminum-nickel bronze. In the exemplary embodiment the upper housing 1502 and the lower housing 1504 are manufactured from aluminum. In alternate embodiments, other materials may be used with preference that those materials have the properties of high-temperature resistance, corrosion resistance, do not absorb water and have sufficient structural strength. The housings preferably is of sufficient size to accommodate the impeller assembly and the associated internal passageways. Furthermore, the housings preferably provide adequate clearance between the stationary housing and the rotating impeller to avoid sliding contact and prevent leakage from occurring between the two stages of the blower. In addition to the clearances, the upper housing 1502 and the lower 1504 may be mirror images of one another.

[0380] Referring now to FIGS. 15D-F, the upper housing 1502 and lower housing 1504 may have an inlet port 1510 and an outlet port 1512. The low-pressure steam from the evaporator/condenser enters the blower assembly 1500 through the inlet port 1510. In the exemplary embodiment, the inlet port is shaped to create a spiral flow around the annular flow channel in the upper housing 1502 and lower housing 1504. After compressing the low-pressure steam, the higher-pressure steam is discharged from the outlet port 1512. Between the inlet ports 1510 and the outlet ports 1512 of the upper housing 1502 and lower housing 1504 the clearances are reduced to prevent the mixing of the high-pressure steam exiting the blower assembly and the low-pressure steam entering the assembly. The exemplary embodiment may include a stripper plate 1516. At this plate the open flow channels provided in the upper housing 1502 and lower housing 1504 allow only the high-pressure steam that is within the impeller blades to pass through to an area near the inlet port 1510, called the inlet region.

[0381] Still referring to FIGS. 15D-F, the carryover of the high-pressure steam through the stripper plate 1516 into the inlet region may irreversibly mix with the incoming low-pressure steam entering the blower assembly 1500 from the inlet port 1510. The mixing of the steam may cause an increase in the temperature of the incoming low-pressure steam. The high-pressure steam carryover may also block the incoming flow of low-pressure steam because of the expansion of the high-pressure steam in the inlet region. The decompression duct 1514 in the upper housing 1502 and lower housing 1504 extracts the compressed steam entrapped in the impeller blades and ejects the steam into the inlet region blocking the incoming low-pressure steam.

[0382] Still referring to FIGS. 15D-F, the distance between the inlet ports 1510 and outlet ports 1512 is controlled by the size of the stripper plate 1516. In the exemplary embodiment the stripper plate area is optimized for reducing the amount of

high-pressure steam carryover into the inlet region and maximizing the working flow channels within the upper housing **1502** and lower housing **1504**.

[0383] Referring now to FIGS. **15H-K**, in the exemplary embodiment the shaft **1514** is supported by pressurized water fed bearings **1516** that are pressed into the impeller assembly **1506** and are supported by the shaft **1514**. In this embodiment, the bearings may be manufactured from graphite. In alternate embodiments, the bearings may be manufactured from materials including but not limited to Teflon composites and bronze alloys.

[0384] Still referring to FIGS. **15H-K**, the water supplied to the pressurized water fed bearings **1516** is preferably clean water as the water may enter the compression chamber of the blower assembly **1500**. If the water enters the compression chamber, the water will likely mix with the pure steam. Contaminated water mixing with the pure steam will result in contaminated high-pressure steam. In the exemplary embodiment product water is supplied to the bearings.

[0385] Hydrodynamic lubrication is desired for the high-speed blower bearings **1516** of the exemplary embodiment. In hydrodynamic operation, the rotating bearing rides on a film of lubricant, and does not contact the stationary shaft. This mode of lubrication offers the lowest coefficients of friction and wear is essentially non-existent since there is no physical contact of components.

[0386] Operating in the other lubrication regimes like Mixed Film Lubrication and Boundary Lubrication results in higher power loss and higher wear rates than hydrodynamic operation. In the exemplary embodiment the blower may operate having hydrodynamic lubrication, film lubrication or a combination of both. The running clearance between the rotating bearing and the stationary shaft; rotating speed of the bearing; and lubricating fluid pressure and flow may affect the bearing lubrication mode.

[0387] Referring to FIGS. **15H-K**, in a hydrodynamic bearing the limiting load factor may be affected by the thermal dissipation capabilities. When compared to an un-lubricated (or a boundary-lubricated) bearing, a hydrodynamic bearing has an additional mechanism for dissipating heat. The hydrodynamic bearing's most effective way to reject heat is to allow the lubricating fluid to carry away thermal energy. In the exemplary embodiment the bearing-feed water removes thermal energy from the bearings **1516**. In this embodiment, the volume of water flowing through the bearing are preferably sufficient to maintain the bearing's temperature within operational limits. In addition, diametrical clearances may be varied to control bearing feed-water flow rate, however, these clearances preferably are not large enough to create a loss of hydrodynamic pressure.

[0388] Still referring to FIGS. **15H-K**, the amount of bearing-feed water supplied to the bearings **1516** is preferably sufficient to maintain hydrodynamic lubrication. Any excess of bearing-feed water may adversely affect the blower assembly **1500**. For example, excess water may quench the high-pressure steam unnecessarily reducing the thermal efficiency of the apparatus. Another adverse affect of excess bearing-feed water may be power loss due to shearing of the fluid water when the excess bearing-feed water is ejected outward from the impeller assembly and forced between the housing wall and the passing impeller blades.

[0389] Referring to FIG. **15L**, in the exemplary embodiment, a return path **1526** for the bearing-feed water is pro-

vided within the blower to prevent excess bearing-feed water from entering the impeller buckets.

[0390] Referring back to FIGS. **15H-K**, in the exemplary embodiment the bearing feed-water pump maintains a pressure of two to five psi on the input to the pressurized water fed bearings **1516**. The bearing-feed-water flow rate may be maintained by having a constant bearing-feed-water pressure. In the exemplary embodiment, the pressure of the bearing-feed water may be controlled to ensure the flow rate of bearing-feed water to bearings **1516**.

[0391] Still referring to FIGS. **15H-K**, in the exemplary embodiment the impeller assembly may be driven by the motor using a magnetic drive coupling rather than a mechanical seal. The lack of mechanical seal results in no frictional losses associated with moving parts contacting one-another. In this embodiment the magnetic drive coupling may include an inner rotor magnet **1518**, a containment shell **1520**, an outer magnet **1522**, and drive motor **1508**.

[0392] Still referring to FIGS. **15H-K**, the inner magnet rotor **1518** may be embedded within a cup. In the exemplary embodiment the magnets are axially positioned. In other embodiments the magnets may be positioned radially. This cup may be manufactured from plastic or metallic materials. In some embodiments the cup material may be but is not limited to RYTON®, ULTEM®, or polysulfone. Similarly, the magnets may be manufactured from materials including but not limited to Ferrite, aluminum-nickel-cobalt, samarium cobalt and neodymium iron boron. In the exemplary embodiment the cup is attached to the impeller assembly **1500**. In the exemplary embodiment the cup is press fit onto the shaft **1514**. Other methods of attaching the cup may include but are not limited to keyseat and setscrews.

[0393] Still referring to FIGS. **15H-K**, the magnetic coupling shell **1520** is positioned between inner rotor magnet **1518** and the outer rotor magnet **1522**. The magnetic coupling shell **1520** is the pressure vessel or the containment shell for the blower assembly **1500**. This shell seals the steam that is being compressed within the blower assembly **1500** preventing the steam from escaping into the surrounding environment.

[0394] Still referring to FIGS. **15H-K**, Eddy current losses may occur because the shell **1520** is located between the inner rotor magnet **1518** and the outer rotor magnet **1522**. If the shell **1520** is electrically conductive then the rotating magnetic field may cause electrical currents to flow through the shell we may cause a loss of power. Conversely, a shell **1520** manufactured from a highly electrically-resistive material is preferred to reduce the amount of Eddy current loss. In the exemplary embodiment titanium may be used for manufacturing the magnetic coupling shell **1520**. This material provides a combination of high-electrical resistivity and corrosion resistance. Corrosion resistance is preferred because of the likelihood of contact between the bearing-feed water and the shell **1520**. In other embodiments the shell **1520** may be manufactured from plastic materials having a higher electrical resistivity and corrosion resistance properties. In these alternate embodiments the shell **1520** may be manufactured from material including but not limited to RYTON®, ULTEM®, polysulfone, and PEEK.

[0395] Still referring to FIGS. **15H-K**, the outer rotor magnet **1522** may be connected to a drive motor **1508**. This motor rotates the outer rotor magnet **1522** causing the inner rotor magnet to rotate allowing the impeller assembly **1506** to compress the low-pressure steam within the cavity defined by

the upper housing **1502** and the lower housing **1504**. In the exemplary embodiment the drive motor may be an electric motor. In alternate embodiments the drive may be but is not limited to internal combustion or Stirling engine.

[0396] Still referring to FIGS. **15H-K**, the blower assembly **1500** may be configured as a two single-stage blower or a two-stage blower. In the operation of a two single-stage blower the incoming low-pressure steam from the evaporator side of the evaporator/condenser is supplied to both the inlet ports of the two separate stages of the blower simultaneously. The first stage may be at the bottom between the lower housing **1504** and the impeller assembly **1506** and the second stage may be at the top between the upper housing **1502** and the impeller assembly **1506**. As the impeller assembly **1506** rotates, the incoming low-pressure steam from the inlet port **1510** of both stages is compressed simultaneously and the high-pressure steam exits from the outlet port **1512** of the upper housing **1502** and the outlet port **1512** of the lower housing **1504**.

[0397] Still referring to FIGS. **15H-K**, in contrast the two-stage blower has two distinct compression cycles. During the first compression cycle the low-pressure steam from the evaporator of the evaporator/condenser is supplied to the inlet **1514** of the lower housing. The compressed steam from the first stage exits through the outlet port **1516** in the lower housing and is supplied to the inlet port **1510** of the upper housing **1502**. This steam compressed in the first stage is compressed again during the second stage. After the second compression cycle the steam may exit the blower assembly **1500** through the outlet port **1512** of the upper housing **1502** at an increased pressure.

[0398] For a given blower design, both the two single-stage blower and the two-stage blower configurations have a unique pressure flow curves. These curves indicate that the two single-stage blower produces a higher flow rate of steam compared to the two-stage blower that produces higher pressure differential. Based on the system operating differential pressure the flow rate and the efficiency of the blower is dependant on the flow characteristics of the blower. Depending on the differential pressure across the blower assembly **1500**, one configuration may be preferred over the other. In the exemplary embodiment, the blower assembly **1500** has a two Single-stage blower configuration.

[0399] Now referring to FIGS. **16-16A**, within the internal cavity defined by the upper housing **1502** and lower housing **1504** is the impeller assembly **1600** (also identified as **1506** of FIG. **15**). The impeller assembly **1600** includes a plurality of impeller blades on each side of the impeller **1602** and a spindle **1604**. In the exemplary embodiment the impeller **1602** may be manufactured from Radel® and the impeller spindle **1604** may be manufactured from aluminum. In alternate embodiments these parts may be manufactured from materials including but not limited to titanium, PPS, ULTEM®. Other materials may be used to manufacture these parts with preference that these materials have high-temperature resistant properties and do not absorb water. In addition, impeller spindle **1604** may have passages for the return of the bearing-feed water back to the sump. These passages prevent the bearing-feed water from entering the impeller buckets.

[0400] Still referring to FIGS. **16-16A**, the blades are designed on each side of the impeller **1602** periphery to produce a series of helical flows as the impeller is rotating. This flow causes the steam to repeatedly pass through the blades for additional energy as the steam flows through the

open annular channel. The number of blades and the bucket volume may be designed to optimize the desired flow rate and the pressure differential. The number of blades and bucket volume is inversely proportional to each other, thus increasing the number of blades creates higher pressure differential but lower flow rate. The labyrinth grooves on the outer periphery of the impeller **1602** prevents steam leakage across the stages of the blower assembly **1500** thereby increasing the blower efficiency.

[0401] Referring back to FIGS. **15H-K**, the shaft **1514** is attached to the upper housing **1502** and lower housing **1504** and is stationary. In the exemplary embodiment the shaft **1514** may be manufactured from titanium. In other embodiments the shaft **1514** may be manufactured from materials including but not limited to aluminum oxide, silicon nitride or titanium, and stainless steel having coatings for increasing wear resistance and corrosion resistance properties. In addition the shaft **1514** may have passages channeling the bearing-feed water to the bearings **1516**.

[0402] Still referring to FIGS. **15H-K**, the blower assembly **1500** in a two-stage blower configuration may create a downward axial thrust force. This force is generated because the second stage at the top of the impeller assembly **1506** is at a higher pressure compared to the first stage that is at the bottom of the impeller assembly **1506**. In an alternate embodiment, this thrust force may be balanced by an equal and opposite magnetic force created by offsetting the inner rotor magnet **1518** and the outer rotor magnet **1522**. This configuration prevents excessive wear of the thrust face of the lower pressurized water fed bearing **1516**.

[0403] Referring now to FIGS. **17-17E**, an alternate regenerative blower embodiment **1700** is shown. This embodiment may include an impeller housing assembly **1702**, a mounting plate **1704**, and a mounting flange **1706**. See FIGS. **17B-D** for cross-section views of regenerative blower assembly **1700**. See also FIG. **17E** for an exploded view of the regenerative blower assembly **1700**.

[0404] Referring now to FIGS. **17-17E**, the mounting plate **1704** connects the mounting flange **1706** to the impeller housing assembly **1702**. The mounting plate also provides ports that provide fluid pathways into the lower housing **1708** of the impeller housing assembly **1702** as shown on FIG. **17E**. In addition, the mounting plate provides passages for the bearing-feed water to exit the blower assembly **1700**.

[0405] Now referring to FIGS. **17F-I**, the impeller housing assembly **1702** may include a lower housing **1708**, an impeller assembly **1710**, and an upper housing **1712**. Also see FIGS. **17H-I** for cross-section views of the impeller housing assembly **1702**.

[0406] Referring now to FIGS. **17F-I**, the lower housing **1708** and upper housing **1712** define an interior cavity containing the impeller assembly **1710**. This cavity provides a volume for the impeller to compress the incoming low-pressure steam. Steam may enter the impeller housing assembly through inlet ports located within the lower housing **1708** and the upper housing **1712**. After the low-pressure steam is compressed by the impeller assembly **1710**, the high-pressure steam may exit through outlet ports located in the lower housing **1708** and the upper housing **1712**. See FIGS. **17J-K** for a detail view of the lower housing **1708**. In addition the lower housing **1708** and the upper housing **1712** may be manufactured from but not limited to aluminum, titanium, PPS, and ULTEM®.

[0407] Still referring to FIGS. 17F-I, the upper housing 1712 may include an access cover 1714 attached to the top surface of the housing. See FIG. 17L showing a top view of the upper housing 1712 with the access cover 1714 installed. This cover allows for access to the ports located within the upper housing cover. See FIG. 17M providing a top view of the upper housing 1712 without the access cover 1714 installed. This view illustrates the inlet and outlet ports located within the upper housing 1712.

[0408] Referring now to FIG. 17N, the lower housing 1708 and the upper housing 1712 may include a decompression duct 1716 and a strip plate 1718 on the inner surface of the housings. These features perform similar functions as those described in the exemplary embodiment of the blower assembly 1500.

[0409] Referring now to FIGS. 18-18A, the inner cavity defined by the lower housing 1708 and upper housing 1712 contains the impeller assembly 1800 (also identified as 1710 of FIG. 17). This assembly may include a spindle 1802 and impeller having blades 1804 as shown on FIGS. 18-18A. As the low-pressure steam enters the inner cavity of the impeller housing 1702, the impeller assembly 1800 compresses the steam as the assembly is rotated.

[0410] Still referring to FIGS. 18-18A, the drive motor provides the rotational energy to rotate the impeller 1804 and blades. Located between the inner surface of the spindle and the shaft may be bearings 1716. These bearings support the shaft and allow the impeller 1804 to rotate freely. The bearings 1716 may be located near the ends of the spindle 1802.

[0411] In alternate embodiments of the apparatus, low-pressure steam may be compressed using a liquid ring pump as described in U.S. Patent Application Pub. No. US 2005/0016828 A1 published on Jan. 27, 2005 entitled "Pressurized Vapor Cycle Liquid Distillation," the contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference herein.

Level Sensor Assembly

[0412] Referring now to FIG. 19, the exemplary embodiment of the water vapor distillation apparatus 100 may also include a level sensor assembly 1900 (also identified as 108 in FIG. 1). This assembly measures the amount of product and/or blowdown water produced by the apparatus 100.

[0413] Referring now to FIGS. 19-19A, the exemplary embodiment of the level sensor assembly 1900 may include a settling tank 1902 and level sensor housing 1904. The settling tank 1902 collects particulate carried within the blowdown water prior to the water entering into the blowdown level sensor tank 1912. The tank removes particulate from the blowdown water by reducing the velocity of the water as it flows through the tank. The settling tank 1902 defines an internal volume. The volume may be divided nearly in half by using a fin 1905 extending from the side wall opposite the drain port 1908 to close proximity of the drain port 1908. This fin 1905 may extend from the bottom to the top of the volume. Blowdown enters through the inlet port 1906 and must flow around the fin 1905 before the water may exit through the level sensing port 1910. As the blowdown enters into the body of the vessel the velocity decreases due to the increase in area. Any particles in the blowdown may fall out of suspension due to the reduction in velocity. The settling tank 1902 may be manufactured out any material having corrosion and heat resistant properties. In the exemplary embodiment the housing is manufactured from RADEL®. In alternate embodi-

ments the settling tank 1902 may be manufactured from other materials including but not limited to titanium, copper-nickel and stainless steel.

[0414] Still referring to FIGS. 19-19A, the settling tank 1902 may have three ports an inlet 1906, a drain 1908 and a level sensor port 1910. The inlet port 1906 may be located within the top surface of the settling tank 1902 as shown on FIGS. 19A-B and may be adjacent to the separating fin 1905 and opposite the drain port 1908. This port allows blowdown water to enter the tank. The drain port 1908 may be located in the bottom of the settling tank 1902 as shown on FIGS. 19A-B. The drain port 1908 provides access to the reservoir to facilitate removal of particulate from the tank. In the exemplary embodiment, the bottom of the tank may be sloped towards the drain as illustrated in FIG. 19B. The level sensor port 1910 may be located within the top surface of the tank as illustrated in FIG. 19A and also adjacent to the separating fin 1905 but on the opposite side as the inlet port 1906. This port provides a fluid pathway to the blowdown level sensor reservoir 1912. A fourth port is not shown in FIG. 19A. This port allows blowdown water to exit the level sensor assembly 1900 and enter the heat exchanger. This port may be located within one of the side walls of the upper half of the settling tank 1902 and away from the inlet port 1906.

[0415] Still referring to FIGS. 19-19A, in the exemplary embodiment a strainer may be installed within the flow path after the blowdown water exits the blowdown level sensor reservoir 1912 and settling tank 1902. The strainer may collect large particulate while allowing blowdown water to flow to other apparatus components. The strainer may be manufactured from material having corrosion resistant properties. In the exemplary embodiment the strainer is manufactured from stainless steel. In addition, the filter element may be removable to support cleaning of the element. The strainer removes particulate from the blowdown water to limit the amount of particulate that enters the heat exchanger. Excess particulate in the blowdown water may cause the inner tubes of the heat exchanger to clog with scale and sediment reducing the efficiency of the heat exchanger. In addition, particulate may produce blockage preventing the flow of blowdown water through the heat exchanger.

[0416] Still referring to FIGS. 19-19A, the settling tank 1902 is in fluid connection with the level sensor housing 1904. This housing may have three interior reservoirs including but not limited to a blowdown level sensor reservoir 1912, a product level sensor reservoir 1914, and a bearing feed-water reservoir 1916. The blowdown level sensor reservoir 1912 is independent of the other reservoirs to prevent contamination from mixing the product water with the blowdown water. The level sensor housing 1904 may be manufactured out any material having corrosion and heat resistant properties. In the exemplary embodiment the housing is manufactured from RADEL®. In other embodiments the housing may be manufactured from other materials including but not limited to titanium, copper-nickel and stainless steel. In other embodiments the housing may be shaped differently with preference that the ball float may have a range of movement of 45 degrees and during this movement there is a constant change in volume of the fluid level.

[0417] Still referring to FIGS. 19-19A, within the level sensor housing 1904 there is a blowdown level sensor reservoir 1912. This reservoir is in fluid connection with the settling tank 1902 through measuring port 1910 located within the top surface of the tank 1902. The reservoir provides a

location where the rate of blowdown water generated by the apparatus may be measured using a level sensor **1918**. As the blowdown water fills the settling tank, some of that water flows through the measuring port **1910** into the blowdown level sensor reservoir **1912**. In addition, a vent port **1923** may be located within the top of the reservoir. This port allows air to escape the reservoir allowing blowdown water to fill the cavity. The volume of the reservoir must be sufficient to maintain a level of water. Housings having too small volume may quickly fill and drain adversely affecting the function of the level sensors. In contrast, reservoirs having a large volume may have slower level sensor response times due to the small fluid level height changes for a given increase or decrease in volume. A larger volume may also dampen out the any fluctuations in the water level produced by the operation of the apparatus.

[**0418**] Still referring to FIGS. **19-19A**, the product level sensor reservoir **1914** may be located next to the blowdown level sensor reservoir **1912**. The product level reservoir **1914** has an inlet port **1920** and an outlet port **1922**. Product water enters the reservoir through the inlet port **1920** and exits the reservoir through the outlet port **1922**. The outlet port **1922** may be located below the low end measurement point of the level sensor to improve flow of water out of the reservoir. Similarly, the inlet port **1920** may be located below the low end measurement point of the level sensor to minimize disruption caused by the incoming water. In the exemplary embodiment the inlet port **1920** and outlet port **1922** are located on the side of the level sensor housing **1904** as shown in FIG. **19A**. This reservoir provides a space for measuring the rate of product being generated by the apparatus. In addition, a vent port **1923** may be located within the top of the reservoir. This port allows air to escape the reservoir allowing product water to fill the cavity.

[**0419**] Still referring to FIGS. **19-19A**, the product level sensor reservoir **1914** is in fluid connection with the bearing feed-water reservoir **1916**. An external port **1924** provides a fluid pathway for the product water to flow between the product level sensor reservoir **1914** and the bearing feed-water reservoir **1916** shown on FIG. **19C**. Product water enters the bearing feed-water reservoir **1916** through the external port **1924**. In addition, the bearing feed-water reservoir **1916** has a supply port **1926** and a return port **1928** shown on FIG. **19C**. The supply port **1926** provides a fluid pathway to lubricate the bearings within the regenerative blower assembly. Similarly, a return port **1928** provides a fluid pathway for the product water to return from lubricating the bearings of the regenerative blower assembly. The supply and return ports may be located on the side of the level sensor housing **1904** as shown in FIG. **19C**.

[**0420**] Still referring to FIGS. **19-19A**, to monitor the amount of product water within the bearing feed-water reservoir **1916** an optical level sensor may be installed. In the exemplary embodiment, the optical level sensor may be located at approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ height in the bearing feed-water reservoir **1916**. This sensor senses when water is present within the reservoir indicating that there is sufficient water to lubricate the bearings. The sensor may be installed by threading the sensor into the level sensor housing **1904**. The sensor may include an o-ring to provide a water-tight seal. In other embodiments the sensor may be but is not limited to conductance sensor, float switches, capacitance sensors, or an ultrasonic sensor.

[**0421**] Referring now to FIGS. **19D-F**, an alternate level sensor housing **1930** having two reservoirs is shown. Within the level sensor housing **1930** there is a blowdown level sensor reservoir **1932**. This reservoir is similar to and performs the same function as the previously described blowdown reservoir **1912** within the level sensor housing **1904**. In contrast, the product level sensor reservoir **1934** now contains product water to feed the bearings of the regenerative blower. The bearing feed-water reservoir **1916** of level sensor housing **1904** is eliminated from this configuration. Instead, product water is withdrawn from the product level sensor reservoir to supply water for the regenerative blower.

[**0422**] Still referring to FIGS. **19D-F**, the product level sensor reservoir **1934** may have an inlet port **1935**, an outlet port **1936**, a return port **1938** and a supply port **1940**. The inlet port **1935** allows product water to enter the reservoir. Similarly, the outlet port **1936** provides a fluid pathway for product water to leave the housing. Furthermore, the supply port **1940** allows product water to leave the reservoir to lubricate the bearings of the regenerative blower. After passing through the bearings of the regenerative blower, product water may re-enter the product level sensor housing through the return port **1938**. These ports may be located anywhere in the housing, but locating the supply port **1940** and the return port **1938** near the bottom of the housing may limit any adverse effect on the function of the level sensor.

[**0423**] Referring now to FIGS. **19G-H**, a sensor **1942** may be positioned on the outside of the level sensor housing **1904** to receive input from the level sensor assembly **1918**. Upon receiving input from the level sensor assembly **1918** the sensor **1942** may signal that the water level in the tank is within a particular range or at a particular level. In the exemplary embodiment the sensor may be a continuous analogue sensor. This type of sensor provides continuous feedback as to the position of the level sensor assembly **1918**. When the magnets within the level sensors change their position, a change in voltage occurs that is measured and used to determine the location of the sensor. Other embodiments may include but are not limited to a hall sensor or reed switch. FIG. **19H** illustrates one possible alternate embodiment for a level sensor assembly including a set of float magnets **1944** and position magnets **1946**. The position magnets **1946** are attached to the side of the level sensor housing **1904**.

[**0424**] Now referring to FIGS. **20-20A**, within the blowdown level sensor reservoir **1912** and the product level sensor reservoir **1914** are level sensors **2000** (also identified as **1918** of FIGS. **19A** and **19E**). These sensors may include a base **2002**, an arm **2004**, and a float ball **2006**.

[**0425**] Referring still to FIGS. **20-20A**, the exemplary embodiment of the level sensors **2000** may include a base **2002** supporting the arm **2004** and the float ball **2006**. The assembly also includes two magnets (not shown). The base is connected to the arm and float ball assembly and the assembly pivots on a small diameter axial (not shown). In addition the base **2002** holds two magnets. These magnets are located 180 degrees from one another and are located on face of the base **2002** and parallel to the pivot. In addition, there magnets may be positioned coaxially to the pivot point within the base **2002**. In the exemplary embodiment the magnets may be cylinder magnets having an axial magnetization direction.

[**0426**] Referring still to FIGS. **20-20A**, the level sensors **2000** measure the rotation of the arm and ball assembly with respect to the pivot. In the exemplary embodiment, the maximum angle of displacement is 45 degrees. In this embodiment

the level sensors are installed to prevent the float ball **2006** from being positioned directly below the pivot. In other embodiments the maximum angle of displacement may be as large as 80 degrees. The sensor may monitor the magnets through the wall of the housing. This configuration allows the sensors not to be exposed to corrosive blowdown water and to seal the level sensor housing. The base may be manufactured from any material having corrosion resistant, heat resistant and non-magnetic properties. In the exemplary embodiment the base **2002** is manufactured from G10 plastic. In alternate embodiments the base **2002** may be manufactured from other materials including but not limited to RADEL®, titanium, copper-nickel and fiberglass laminate.

[0427] Still referring to FIGS. 20-20A, attached to the base **2002** is an arm **2004**. The arm **2004** connects the base **2002** with the float ball **2006**. In the exemplary embodiment the arm **2004** is manufactured from G10 plastic material. Other materials may be used to manufacture the arm **2004** with preference that those materials have sufficient high temperature resistant properties. Other materials may include, but are not limited to stainless steel, plastic, RADEL®, titanium, and copper-nickel. The length of the arm is governed by the size of the level sensor reservoirs. In addition, the exemplary embodiment has a plurality of apertures located along and perpendicular to the arm's longitudinal axis. These apertures reduce the weight of the arm and allow the arm to be more sensitive to level changes.

[0428] Still referring to FIGS. 20-20A, affixed to the other end of the arm **2004** is a float ball **2006**. The float ball **2006** provides surface area for the flow of water to contact. The forces applied to the float ball **2006** by the water cause the level sensor assembly **2000** to pivot about the small diameter shaft. This change in position of the arm will indicate the amount of water in the apparatus. The float ball may be manufactured from any material having corrosion and thermal resistant properties. In addition, the material preferably has a low rate of water absorption. In the exemplary embodiment the float ball is manufactured from hollow stainless steel. For applications where the source water is highly concentrated, such as sea water, the float ball **2006** may be manufactured from any highly corrosion resistant material including but not limited to plastic, titanium and copper-nickel. Furthermore, the float ball **2006** is preferably of the proper size to be positioned within the level sensor housing **1904**, such that the float is capable of freely moving. In addition, the size of the float ball **2006** is governed by the size of the level sensor reservoirs.

[0429] Referring now to FIGS. 21-21A, connected to the supply port **1926** of the bearing feed-water reservoir **1916** may be a bearing feed-water pump **2100** (also identified as **110** on FIGS. 1-1A). The pump **2100** enables the product water to flow from the bearing feed-water reservoir **1916** to the regenerative blower. In the exemplary embodiment, the flow rate is 60 ml/min with a pressure ranging from 2 psi to 2¼ psi. Any type of pump may be used with preference that the pump can supply a sufficient quantity of water to maintain the proper lubricating flow to the bearings within the regenerative blower. In addition, the pump **2100** preferably is heat resistant to withstand the high temperature of the surrounding environment and of the high-temperature product water passing through the pump. In the exemplary embodiment the bearing feed-water pump **110** is a GOTECH linear positive displacement pump, model number ETX-50-VIC. In alternate embodiments, other pump types such as a centrifugal

pump may be used with preference that the pump is capable of operating in high temperatures.

Controls

[0430] The apparatus may also include a control manifold having a plurality of control valves for the different water flow paths. Typically, this manifold may include a control valve within the inlet piping for the source water to controls the amount of water that enters the apparatus. At excessive pressures the control valve could fail to open or once open may fail to close thus a regulator may be included in inlet piping to regulate the pressure of the source water.

[0431] Similarly, the manifold may also include a control valve within the outlet piping carrying blowdown water out of the apparatus. This valve may allow the operator to control the amount of blowdown water leaving the apparatus.

[0432] The control manifold may also include a control valve within the outlet piping for the product water. This valve may allow the operator to control the amount of product water leaving the apparatus. In the exemplary embodiment, there is one control valve for each section of outlet piping. Similarly, the apparatus includes a vent valve to release gaseous compounds from the evaporator/condenser. The vent valve maintains operating conditions of the apparatus by venting off small amounts of steam. Releasing steam prevents the apparatus from overheating. Similarly, releasing steam also prevents the buildup of compounds in the condenser space that may prevent the apparatus from functioning.

[0433] Typically, the control valves may be same type. In the exemplary embodiment, the controls are solenoid type valves Series 4BKR manufactured from SPARTAN SCIENTIFIC, Boardman, Ohio 44513, model number 9-4BKR-55723-1-002. In alternate embodiments, the controls may be but are not limited to proportional valves. The control valves are electronically operated using an electrical input of zero to five volts.

[0434] Moreover, the apparatus may include a backpressure regulator as described in U.S. Patent Application Publication No. US 2005/0194048 A1 published on Sep. 8, 2005 entitled "Backpressure Regulator," the contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference herein.

[0435] The water vapor distillation apparatus may include a voltage regulator. Typically, the apparatus may receive single-phase power provided from a traditional wall outlet. In other countries, however, the voltage may differ. To account for this difference in voltage, a voltage regulator may be included in the apparatus to ensure the proper type of voltage is supplied to the electrical components of the apparatus.

[0436] In addition, a battery may be included within the system to provide electrical energy to the apparatus. When electrical energy is supplied from a battery the apparatus will preferably include an electrical inverter to change incoming electricity from direct current to alternating current. In other embodiments, the apparatus may receive electrical energy from a Stirling and internal combustion engine. These embodiments may also require an electrical inverter. In other embodiments, the apparatus may include a boost loop to increase the amount of voltage supplied to the apparatus to power the electrical components.

Method of Distilling Water

[0437] Also disclosed herein is a method of water vapor distillation including the steps of straining the source water,

heating the source water using a heat exchanger, transforming the source water into low-pressure steam, removing water from the source vapor to create dry low-pressure steam, compressing the dry low-pressure steam into high-pressure steam, and condensing the high-pressure steam into product water.

[0438] Referring now to FIGS. 22-22A, source water is contaminated water that is transformed into a vapor and later condenses into clean and pure water called, product water. FIG. 22 illustrates the source water fluid paths within the apparatus disclosed previously. The source water enters the apparatus through an inlet tube connected to the heat exchanger as illustrated in FIG. 22A. Typically, a pump may be installed to cause the source water to flow through the inlet tube into the heat exchanger. Within the inlet tube there may be a strainer 2202 installed between where the source water enters the tube and the connection with the heat exchanger, see FIG. 22A. In other embodiments, a regulator 2204 may be positioned within the inlet tube to regulate the flow of the source water into the apparatus. Similarly, in one embodiment, a valve 2206 may be positioned within the inlet tube to isolate the apparatus from the water source.

[0439] Referring still to FIGS. 22-22A, in operation, source water passes through a strainer 2202 to remove large particulates. These large particulates may adversely affect the operation of the apparatus, by clogging the inlet and blowdown valves or the inner tubes of the heat exchanger. In addition, particulate may be deposited onto the tubes of the evaporator/condenser reducing the efficiency of the apparatus. In the exemplary embodiment the strainer 2202 is located before the control valves. In other embodiments the strainer may be positioned before the inlet pump (not shown). In the exemplary embodiment the strainer 2202 has a 50 micron user-cleaner unit. In alternate embodiments the apparatus may not include a strainer 2202. After the source water passes through the strainer 2202, the water enters the heat exchanger 2208.

[0440] Referring now to FIG. 22B, upon entering the heat exchanger 2208, the source water may fill the outer tube of the heat exchanger 2208. In the exemplary embodiment, the heat exchanger is a counter-flow tube-in-tube heat exchanger. The source water enters the heat exchanger at approximately ambient temperature. Conversely, the product and blowdown water enter the heat exchanger having temperature greater than ambient. The source water enters the heat exchanger at one end and the product and blowdown water enter the heat exchanger at the opposite end. As the source water flows through the heat exchanger the high thermal energy of the product and blowdown water is conducted outwardly from the inner tubes of the heat exchanger to the source water. This increase in the temperature of the source water enables the water to more efficiently change into steam in the evaporator/condenser.

[0441] Referring now to FIGS. 22C-D, once the source water passes through the counter-flow tube-in-tube heat exchanger, the water exits the heat exchanger and enters the regenerative blower motor cooling loop. During operation, the regenerative blower motor 2210 creates thermal energy. This thermal energy must be removed from blower motor 2210 for the blower to operate properly. As the source water passes through the blower motor cooling loop the thermal energy created by the blower motor is transferred to the source water. The heat transfer allows the blower motor to maintain a lower operating temperature and raises the temperature of the source water. The higher temperature of the source water increases the efficiency of the apparatus,

because less energy is required to produce the phase change of the source water to a vapor. The source water leaves the regenerative blower motor cooling loop enters the evaporator/condenser through the sump 2212, illustrated in FIG. 22E.

[0442] Referring now to FIGS. 23-23A, also present in the apparatus is highly concentrated source water, called blowdown water. This water removes particulate from the apparatus to prevent scaling on the tubes of the evaporator/condenser. This fluid may contain any non-volatile contaminants that were present in the source water. These contaminants may include but are not limited to be scale from foulants, heavy metals or organic compounds. Specifically, these foulants may include but not limited to calcium carbonate, magnesium carbonate. In addition, blowdown water transfers thermal energy to the source water when passing through the heat exchanger. FIG. 23 shows the blowdown water fluid paths within the apparatus disclosed previously. The blowdown water is collected in the steam chest 2302 as shown in FIG. 23A. As the low-pressure water vapor passes through the steam chest 2302, water droplets are separated from the water vapor. These droplets accumulate in the bottom of the steam chest 2302 and are added to the existing blowdown water. As the level of blowdown water increases, the water exits the steam chest 2302 through a port. Through this port, the blowdown water leaves the steam chest 2302 and enters the level sensor housing 2304, illustrated in FIG. 23A.

[0443] Referring now to FIGS. 23B-C, the blowdown water enters the level sensor housing 2304 and fills the settling tank 2306. As the blowdown water passes through the settling tank 2306 particulate within the water settles to the bottom of the tank and thus separating the water from the particulate. Separating the particulate from the water prevents the particulate from entering the heat exchanger. The heat exchanger may be adversely affected by the presence of particulate in the water. Particulate may collect in the inner tubes of the heat exchanger causing the heat exchanger to have a lower efficiency. Particulate may reduce flow of blowdown through the inner tubes reducing the amount of thermal energy capable of being transferred to the source water. In some instances, the collection of particulate may produce a blockage within the inner tubes preventing the flow of blowdown water through the heat exchanger. As blowdown water fills the settling tank 2306, the water may also fill the blowdown level sensor reservoir 2308, illustrated in FIG. 23C.

[0444] Referring now to FIGS. 23D-G, upon exiting the level sensor housing 2304, the blowdown water may pass through a strainer 2310 before entering the heat exchanger 2312 shown on FIG. 23E. The strainer 2310 removes particulates within the blowdown water that remain after flowing through the settling tank 2306 of the level sensor housing 2304. Removing particulates from the blowdown water reduces particulate build-up in the heat exchanger and valves within the system. The blow down water enters the heat exchanger 2312 fills one of the inner tubes as shown in FIG. 23E. The water fills the heat exchanger 2312 as shown in FIG. 23F. As the blowdown water passes through the heat exchanger, thermal energy is conducted from the higher temperature blowdown water to the lower temperature source water through the tube containing the blowdown water. The blowdown water exits the heat exchanger illustrated on FIG. 23G. After leaving the heat exchanger, blowdown fluid may pass through a mixing can 2314 to prevent steam being released from the apparatus potentially harming a person or adjacent object. Steam may be periodically vented from the

condenser space to maintain the apparatus energy balance. Similarly, gaseous vapors (ex. volatile organic compounds, air) must be purged from the condenser space to maintain proper operation of the apparatus. Both the steam and gaseous vapors are released into the mixing can **2314** having low-temperature blowdown water. By mixing the steam into the blowdown water the steam condenses allowing for steam to be released safely. In other embodiments, there may be a valve positioned in the tubing connecting the heat exchanger **2312** and mixing can **2314** to isolate the mixing can from the apparatus or adjust the flow rate of the blowdown water exiting the apparatus.

[0445] Referring now to FIGS. **24-24A**, product water is formed when high-pressure steam condenses when contacting the outer surface of the tubes within the evaporator/condenser. FIG. **24** shows the product water fluid paths within the apparatus disclosed previously. The product water is created in the evaporator/condenser **2402** as shown in FIG. **24A**. As the high-pressure steam condenses against the outer surface of the tubes of the evaporator/condenser forming water droplets. These droplets accumulate in the bottom of the evaporator/condenser **2402** creating product water. As the level of product water increases, the water exits the evaporator/condenser **2402** through a port and enters the level sensor housing **2404**, illustrated in FIG. **24A**.

[0446] Referring now to FIGS. **24B-24E**, the product water may enter the level sensor housing **2404** through a port connected to the product level sensor reservoir **2406** shown on FIG. **24B**. This reservoir collects incoming product water and measures the amount of water created by the apparatus. The water exits the product level sensor reservoir **2406** and enters the heat exchanger **2408** illustrated in FIG. **24C**. While passing through the heat exchanger **2408**, the high-temperature product water transfers thermal energy to the low-temperature source water through the inner tubes of the heat exchanger **2408**. FIG. **24D** illustrates the product water passing through the heat exchanger **2408**. After passing through the heat exchanger **2408**, the product water exits the apparatus as illustrated in FIG. **24E**. In the exemplary embodiment the apparatus may include a product-divert valve **2410** and product valve **2412**. The product valve **2412** allows the operator to adjust the flow rate of product water leaving the apparatus. Typically, the once the reservoir is 50 percent full, then the product valve **2412** is cycled such that the amount of water entering the reservoir is equal to the amount leaving the reservoir. During initial start-up of the system the first several minutes of production the product water produced is rejected as waste by opening the product-divert valve **2410**. Once it has been determined that the product is of sufficient quality the product-divert valve **2410** closes and the product valve **2412** begins operation.

[0447] Referring now to FIGS. **24F-24H**, as product water fills the product level sensor reservoir **2406**, water may also enter the bearing feed-water reservoir **2410**. The bearing feed-water reservoir **2410** collects incoming product water for lubricating the bearings within the regenerative blower **2412**. Product water exits the bearing feed-water tank **2410** and may enter a pump **2414** as shown in FIG. **24G**. The pump **2414** moves the product water to the regenerative blower. After leaving the pump **2414**, the product water enters the regenerative blower **2412** illustrated on FIG. **24H**.

[0448] Referring now to FIGS. **24H-24I**, upon entering the blower **2412**, the product water provides lubrication between the bearings and the shaft of the blower. After exiting the

regenerative blower **2412**, the product water may re-enter the level sensor housing **2404** through the bearing feed-water reservoir **2410**, see FIG. **24I**.

[0449] Now referring to FIGS. **25-25C**, to support the flow of the water throughout the apparatus vent paths may be provided. These paths support the flow of the water through the apparatus by removing air or steam from the apparatus. The vent paths are shown in FIG. **25**. FIG. **25A** illustrates a vent path from the blowdown level sensor reservoir **2502** to the steam chest **2504** of the evaporator/condenser **2508**. This path allows air within the reservoir to exit allowing more blowdown water to enter the reservoir. Similarly, FIG. **25B** illustrates a vent path from the product level sensor reservoir **2506** to the evaporator/condenser **2508**. This path allows air within the reservoir to exit allowing product water to enter the reservoir. Finally, FIG. **25C** shows a vent path from the condenser area of the evaporator/condenser **2508** to allow air within the apparatus to exit the apparatus to the surrounding atmosphere through a mixing can **2510**. In addition, this vent path assists with maintaining the apparatus' equilibrium by venting small quantities of steam from the apparatus.

[0450] Referring now to FIG. **26**, in operation, source water enters the sump **2602** of the evaporator/condenser **2608** in the manner described in FIGS. **22-22E**. When source water initially enters the sump **2602**, additional thermal energy may be transferred to the water using a heating element. Typically, the heating element may be used during initial start up of the water vapor distillation apparatus. Otherwise the heater will not typically be used. As the amount of source water in the sump increases, the water flows out of the sump and into the tubes **2604** of the evaporator/condenser through ports within a plate **2606** positioned between the sump **2602** and the evaporator/condenser **2608**, illustrated in FIG. **26**. During initial start-up of the apparatus, the evaporator section of the evaporator/condenser **2608** is flooded with source water until there is sufficient amount of water in the blowdown level sensor reservoir. After initial start-up the tubes **2604** remain full of source water.

[0451] Referring now to FIGS. **26A-26E**, once in the tubes **2604**, the source water is heated from conduction of thermal energy through the tube walls from the high-pressure steam present on the outside of the tubes **2604**. FIG. **26A** illustrates the wet low-pressure steam flowing through the tubes **2604** of the evaporator/condenser **2608**. The wet low-pressure steam travels through the tubes **2604** of the evaporator/condenser **2608** and enters the steam chest **2610** illustrated in FIG. **26B**. As steam flows through the interior of the steam chest **2610**, the water droplet within the steam are separated from the steam. These droplets collect at the base of the steam chest **2610** and are added to the blowdown water already present in the base, see FIGS. **26C-D**. Blowdown water flows out of the apparatus in manner described in FIGS. **23-23G**. The dry low-pressure steam exits the steam chest **2610** and enters the regenerative blower **2612** as shown on FIGS. **26E-F**.

[0452] Now referring to FIGS. **26F-H**, once in the regenerative blower **2612**, the dry low-pressure steam is compressed creating dry high-pressure steam. After the dry steam is compressed, the high-pressure steam exits the regenerative blower **2612** and enters the steam tube **2614** of the steam chest **2610**. See FIGS. **26G-H** illustrating the steam exiting the blower **2612** and entering the steam tube **2614** of the steam chest **2610**.

[0453] Now referring to FIGS. **26H-J**, the steam tube **2614** is in fluid connection with the inner cavity of the evaporator/

condenser **2608**. The steam tube **2614** provides an isolated pathway for the steam to enter the condenser side of the evaporator/condenser **2608** from the blower **2612**. The high-pressure steam is isolated to maintain the pressure of the steam and to ensure that the steam has no contaminants. The dry high-pressure steam exits the steam tube **2614** of the steam chest **2610** and enters the inner cavity of the evaporator/condenser **2608**. See FIG. **261** showing the inner cavity of the evaporator/condenser **2608** containing high-pressure steam. As the high-pressure steam contacts the outer surfaces tubes **2604** of the evaporator/condenser **2608**, the steam transfers thermal energy to the tubes **2604**. This energy is conducted through the tube walls to the source water located within the tubes **2604**. When the energy is transferred from the steam to the tube walls, the steam condenses from a vapor to a fluid. This fluid is known as product water. As water droplets form on the outside of the tube walls, these droplets flow down to the base of the evaporator/condenser **2608**. See FIG. **26J** showing the formation of product water within the inner cavity of the evaporator/condenser **2608**. When the amount of product water within the cavity is sufficient, product water may flow out of the evaporator/condenser as illustrated in FIGS. **24-24I**.

[0454] Referring now to FIG. **27**, there are several factors that may affect the performance of the apparatus described. One of these factors is pressure difference across the regenerative blower. FIG. **27** is a chart illustrating the relationship between the amount energy required to produce one liter of product water and the change in pressure across the regenerative blower. Ideally, one would want to operate the blower, such that, the most product water is produce using the least amount electricity. From this graph, operating the blower with a pressure differential between 1.5 psi and 2 psi produces a liter of product water using the least amount of energy. Operating the blower at pressures above or below this range increases the amount of energy that is needed to produce one liter of water.

[0455] Now referring to FIG. **28**, another factor that may affect the performance of the apparatus is the number of heat transfer tubes installed within the inner cavity of the evaporator/condenser assembly. FIG. **28** illustrates the relationship between the number of heat transfer tubes and the rate of production of product water for a given change in pressure across the regenerative blower. From this chart, it is determined that having a greater number of heat transfer tubes increases the production of product water. In this graph, the configuration producing the largest amount of product water per hour is the assembly having 85 tubes. The configuration producing the least amount of water is the assembly having only 43 tubes for pressures below 2 psi.

[0456] Referring now to FIG. **29**, this figure illustrates the amount of product water created by different heat transfer tube configurations. In this graph, the configuration having 102 heat transfer tubes generated the highest amount of product water. In contrast, the configuration having a shorter tube length and only 48 tubes produced the least amount of product water.

[0457] Now referring to FIG. **30**, despite having a lower number of tubes than other configurations, the 48 heat transfer tube configuration produces more water per surface area. FIG. **30** illustrates the relationship between the amount of product created and the size of the heat transfer surface area. This chart shows that the 48 heat transfer tube configuration having a tube length of 15 inches is the most efficient design.

The least efficient configuration is the 102 heat transfer tube design. Thus, having a large number of tubes within the evaporator/condenser may produce more water, but a design having a lower number of tubes may provide the most efficient use of resources.

[0458] Referring now to FIG. **31**, this figure illustrates the difference of the performance two 48 heat transfer tube designs. In this chart the difference in the designs is the tube lengths. At various pressure changes across the regenerative blower, this graph contrasts the amount of energy used and rate of production of water for the two configurations. The configuration having the 20 inch long tubes produces slightly more product while consuming slightly less energy at equal pressure differences across the regenerative blower.

Methods of Control

[0459] The pressure difference across the compressor directly determines the amount of product water that the apparatus may generate. To ensure a particular amount of product water output from the apparatus, one can adjust the pressure difference across the compressor. Increasing the speed of the compressor will typically result in an increase in pressure differential across the two sides of the evaporator/condenser. Increasing the pressure differential increases rate at which source water is evaporated into clean product water.

[0460] One of the limiting factors in controlling the water vapor distillation apparatus **100** is the amount of blowdown water that is required to operate the machine. Without sufficient blowdown water, particulate separated from the source water will remain in the apparatus. This build-up of particulate will adversely affect the operation and efficiency of the apparatus.

[0461] To ensure that particulate is removed from the apparatus, there must be a sufficient amount of blowdown water present to carry the particulate out of the apparatus. To determine how much blowdown water is required to operate the apparatus in a particular environment, one must know the quality of the water entering the apparatus (source water). If the source water has a high concentration of particulate then more blowdown water will be needed to absorb and remove the particulate from the apparatus. Conversely, if the source water has a low concentration of particulate then less blowdown water will be required.

[0462] To control and observe the amount of product and blowdown water generated by the apparatus a couple of different control methods may be implemented. These schemes may include but are not limited to measuring the level of product and blowdown water within reservoirs located in the apparatus, measuring the flow rate of the product and blowdown water created by the apparatus, measuring the quality of the incoming source water and measuring the output quality of the product water.

[0463] The level sensor assembly of the exemplary embodiment may measure both the level of and the flow rate of water. The water level may be measured by the movement of the level sensor assembly. As the water fills the reservoir, the water produces a change in position of the level sensor assembly.

[0464] One may determine the flow rate of water by knowing the change in position of the level sensor assembly, the area of the reservoir and the time associated with the change in water level. Using a float sensor to determine flow is advantageous because there is no pressure drop resulting from the use of a float sensor. The flow rate may indicate the perfor-

mance of the apparatus and whether that performance is consistent with normal operation of the apparatus. This information allows the operator to determine whether the apparatus is functionally properly. For example, if the operator determines the flow rate is below normal operating conditions, then the operator may check the strainer within the inlet piping for impurities or the tubes of the evaporator/condenser for scaling. Similarly, the operator may use the flow rate to make adjustments to the apparatus. These adjustments may include changing the amount of blowdown and product water created. Although a flow rate may indicate performance of the apparatus, this measurement is not required.

[0465] The water quality of either the inlet source water or the outlet product water may be used to control the operation of the water vapor distillation apparatus. This control method determines the operation of the machine based on the quality of the water. In one embodiment the conductivity of the product water is monitored. When the conductivity exceeds a specified limit than the sensor sends a signal to shut down the apparatus. In some embodiments the sensors may be, but are not limited to a conductivity sensor. In an alternate embodiment, may include monitoring the conductivity of the blowdown water. When the conductivity of the blowdown water exceeds a specified limit then the sensor sends a signal to increase the amount of source water entering the apparatus. The increase in source water will reduce the conductivity of the blowdown water. In another embodiment, the conductivity of the source water may be monitored. When the conductivity exceeds a specified limit than the sensor sends a signal to adjust the flow rate of the source water. The higher the source water conductivity may result in higher flow rates for the source and blowdown water.

[0466] In alternate embodiments, the apparatus may include a control scheme where the apparatus has a steady-state mode. During this mode, the apparatus reduces the amount of power consumed. In other embodiments, the heating elements may remain operating during this mode to maintain a particular temperature or temperature range of the source water in the sump. Maintaining the temperature of the source water in the sump reduces the amount of time for the machine to start generating more product water. In addition, during this mode the regenerative blower is not functioning and the inlet and outlet valves are closed.

[0467] Examples of tests that may be performed on a source water sample to analyze the quality of the source water include, but are not limited to, bacterial testing, mineral testing, and chemical testing. Bacterial tests indicate the amount of bacteria that may be present within the sample. The most common type of bacterial test is total coliform.

[0468] Mineral testing results may indicate the amount of mineral impurities in the water. Large amounts of minerals and other impurities may pose a health hazard and affect the appearance and usefulness of the water.

[0469] Another type of water testing that may be accomplished is chemical testing. Many man-made chemicals may contaminate a water supply and pose health hazards to potential consumers of the water. Unless a specific chemical or type of chemical is suspected to be in the water, this type of test may not be routinely performed as the testing is expensive for unspecified chemical contaminants. However, if a particular chemical is suspected to be present in the source water, a test may be performed. Examples of some specific water quality tests are described below.

[0470] pH—measures the relative acidity of the water. A pH level of 7.0 is considered neutral. Pure water has a pH of 7.0. Water with a pH level less than 7.0 is considered to be acidic. The lower the pH, the more acidic the water. Water with a pH greater than 7.0 is considered to be basic or alkaline. The greater the pH, the greater its alkalinity. In the US, the pH of natural water is usually between 6.5 and 8.5. Fresh water sources with a pH below 5 or above 9.5 may not be able to sustain plant or animal species. pH may be determined using any known method in the art for testing.

[0471] The pH is preferably measured immediately at the source water test site as changes in temperature affect pH value. Preferably, the water sample is taken at the source at a location away from the “bank”, if using a lake, stream, river, puddle, etc, and below the water surface.

[0472] Nitrate—Nitrogen is an element required by all living plants and animals to build protein. In aquatic ecosystems, nitrogen is present in many forms. It may combine with oxygen to form a compound called nitrate. Nitrates may come from fertilizers, sewage, and industrial waste. They may cause eutrophication of lakes or ponds. Eutrophication occurs when nutrients (such as nitrates and phosphates) are added to a body of water. These nutrients usually come from runoff from farmlands and lawns, sewage, detergents, animal wastes, and leaking septic systems. The presence of nitrate may be determined using any known method in the art for testing.

[0473] Turbidity—Turbidity refers to how clear or how cloudy the water is. Clear water has a low turbidity level and cloudy or muddy water has a high turbidity level. High levels of turbidity may be caused by suspended particles in the water such as soil, sediments, sewage, and plankton. Soil may enter the water by erosion or runoff from nearby lands. Sediments may be stirred up by too much activity in the water, for example, by fish or humans. Sewage is a result of waste discharge and high levels of plankton may be due to excessive nutrients in the water.

[0474] Where the turbidity of the water is high, there will be many suspended particles in it. These solid particles will block sunlight and prevent aquatic plants from getting the sunlight they need for photosynthesis. The plants will produce less oxygen thereby decreasing the DO levels. The plants will die more easily and be decomposed by bacteria in the water, which will reduce the DO levels even further. Turbidity may be determined using any known method in the art for testing.

[0475] Coliform—Where coliform bacteria are present in the water supply it is an indication that the water supply may be contaminated with sewage or other decomposing waste. Usually coliform bacteria are found in greater abundance on the surface film of the water or in the sediments on the bottom.

[0476] Fecal coliform, found in the lower intestines of humans and other warm-blooded animals, is one type of coliform bacteria. The presence of fecal coliform in a water supply is a good indication that sewage has polluted the water. Testing may be done for fecal coliform specifically or for total coliform bacteria which includes all coliform bacteria strains and may indicate fecal contamination. The presence of coliform may be determined using any known method in the art for testing.

[0477] In operation the water machine may perform conductivity testing of the source water and/or the product water to determine the quality of the water entering and exiting the system. This testing may be accomplished using conductivity

sensors installed within the inlet and outlet piping of the system. Water having a high conductivity indicates that the water has greater amount of impurities. Conversely, water having a lower amount of conductivity indicates that water has a lower level of impurities. This type of testing is generic and provides only a general indication of the purity/quality of the water being analyzed.

[0478] Other types of testing may be accomplished for analyzing specific levels of the following water impurities/characteristics include but are not limited to pH, hardness, chlorides, color, turbidity, sulfate, chlorine, nitrites/nitrates, and coliforms. Typically to analyze the water entering or exiting the machine the operator may first obtain a sample of the water. After obtaining the desired sample the water may then be tested using a water testing kit available from Hach Company, Loveland, Colo. 80539-0389. Other methods of testing the purity of water may include sending the water to laboratory for analysis.

Systems for Distilling Water

[0479] Also disclosed herein is where the apparatus for distilling water described previously may be implemented into a distribution system as described in U.S. Patent Application Pub. No. US 2007/0112530 A1 published on May 17, 2007 entitled "Systems and Methods for Distributed Utilities," the contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference herein. Furthermore, a monitoring and/or communications system may also be included within the distribution system as described in U.S. Patent Application Pub. No. US 2007/0112530 A1 published on May 17, 2007 entitled "Systems and Methods for Distributed Utilities," the contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference herein.

Alternate Embodiments

[0480] Although the exemplary embodiment of the still/water vapor distillation apparatus has been described, alternate embodiments of still, including alternate embodiments of particular elements of the still (i.e., heat exchanger, evaporator/condenser, compressor, etc) are contemplated. Thus, in some alternate embodiments, one of more of the elements are replaced with alternate embodiment elements described herein. In some embodiments, the entire still is replaced by an alternate embodiment, for example, the system as described in one embodiment utilizes the exemplary embodiment as the still while in other embodiments, the system utilizes an alternate embodiment.

[0481] Referring to FIGS. 32-32C, alternate embodiments of the water vapor distillation apparatus having a liquid ring pump 3200 disclosed. The ring pump may include a fully rotatable housing that provides maximum reduction in frictional loss yet maintains simplicity of design and cost-effectiveness of production is shown in FIGS. 32 through 32C. As can be seen in FIG. 32, stator 3202 is stationary relative to rotor 3204, and comprises an intake 3206 and exit 3208. Steam is drawn in at pressure P_1 and passes into rotor chamber 3210. Rotor 3204 is off-set from a central axis Z upon which the rotating housing and the liquid ring pump are centered. As rotor 3204 turns about central shaft 3212 with rotor bearings 3214, the effective volume of chamber 3210 decreases. Steam is thereby compressed to pressure P_2 as it is carried along a rotational path into exit 3208, to be routed to an evaporator/condenser 104 of FIG. 1. Preferably, a rotatable housing (not

shown) rotates with the liquid ring in the liquid ring pump, to reduce energy loss due to friction.

[0482] Referring to FIGS. 32A-B, the stator 3202 has support structures 3216 in the input and output regions. The individual vanes 3218 of rotor 3204 can be seen below the support structures 3216 in the top view of stator 3202 shown in FIGS. 32A-B, as well as the concentric placement of rotor 3204 about the central axis. This particular embodiment of a liquid ring pump is both axially fed and axially ported and may have a vertical, horizontal, or other orientation during operation. FIG. 32C shows yet another view of this embodiment.

[0483] The liquid ring pump 3200 is designed to operate within a fairly narrow range of input and output pressure, such that generally, the apparatus operates in the range of from 5 to 15 psig. Apparatus pressure may be regulated using check valves to release steam from chamber 3210 of FIGS. 32-32C. Improved apparatus performance is preferably achieved by placing exit 3208 of the exhaust port at a specific angle of rotation about the rotor axis, wherein the specific angle corresponds to the pressure rise desired for still operation. One embodiment of a specific port opening angle to regulate apparatus pressure is shown in FIG. 32A. Exit 3208 is placed at approximately 90 degrees of rotation about the rotor access, allowing steam from chamber 3210 to vent. Placing exit 3208 at a high angle of rotation about the stator axis would raise the apparatus pressure and lower pump throughput, while placing exit 3208 at a lower angle of rotation about the stator axis would result in lower apparatus pressure and increased pump throughput. Choosing the placement of exit 3208 to optimize apparatus pressure may yield improved pump efficiency. Further, the placement of exit 3208 to maintain apparatus pressure may minimize apparatus complexity by eliminating check valves at the exhaust ports to chamber 3210, thereby providing a simpler, more cost-effective compressor.

[0484] Referring now to FIG. 32D, during operation, it may be desirable to measure the depth of the liquid ring in the compressor, to optimize performance. In the embodiments herein disclosed, liquid ring pump housing 3232 rotates with the liquid ring in the pump, and the temperature of the fluid is typically around 110 degrees C. Methods of measuring ring depth include any one of the usual methods, such as using ultra-sound, radar, floats, fluid conductivity, and optical sensors. Because of the complexities of the rotating housing, use of a capacitive sensor is a preferred embodiment for this measurement, wherein as the depth of the fluid in the capacitor changes, the capacitance of the capacitor also changes.

[0485] Still referring to FIG. 32D, a disc-shaped capacitor sensor plate 3234 is mounted to the bottom of rotating housing 3232, equidistant from the bottom surface 3232A of rotating housing 3232, and the bottom surface 3204A of rotor 3204. The capacitor is thus defined by housing 3232, rotor 3204, and capacitor sensor 3234. Leads 3240 connect the capacitor, from capacitor sensor 3234, through a passageway 3236A in rotating housing shaft 3236, to the secondary 3242 of a core transformer, preferably of ferrite (not shown). In one embodiment, the secondary 3242 is rotating at the same speed as the capacitor plate, and is in inductive communication with the primary of the ferrite core transformer. The primary winding 3238 is stationary, and signals to and from the level-measuring capacitor are communicated through the transformer, in this way enabling depth information to be transmitted from a rotating position to a stationary position. Capacitance is measure by determining the LC resonance of

the capacitor (C) with the inductance (L) of the transformer secondary. In an exemplary embodiment, an LC oscillator circuit is constructed and the oscillation frequency is used as a measure of the capacitance.

[0486] Referring to FIG. 32E, this figure illustrates an alternate design of the pump 3200 to prevent contaminated fluid droplets from being entrained and carried along with vapor to evaporator/condenser 104 of FIG. 1. In such an embodiment, the liquid ring pump 3200 is within the head space of the evaporator/condenser 104, and mist is eliminated as rotating housing 3232 rotates, wherein the rotation creates a cyclone effect, flinging mist and water droplets off by centrifugal force to collide with the still housing and run down to the water in the sump. There may also be fins 3244 extending from the outside of rotating housing 3232 to enhance circulation and rotation of vapor in the annular space between rotating housing 3232 and fixed housing 3228. A steam exit 3242 is provided for passage of steam to evaporator/condenser 104.

[0487] Referring now to FIGS. 32F-G, an alternative embodiment for a liquid ring pump 3200 may include a ring pump 3252 with an outer rotatable housing 3254 that encloses a single two-channel stator/body 3256, and a rotor 3258, wherein the seal surface between the rotatable housing 3254 and stationary stator/body 3256 is a cylinder. Two-channel stator/body 3256 is kept stationary in reference to a chamber 3260 of pump 3252 as well as to rotor 3258 and rotatable housing 3254, and comprises an intake 3262 and an exit 3264. Steam is drawn in at pressure P_1 and passes through an intake orifice 3266. When the intake orifice 3266 lines up with an intake hole 3268 in rotor 3258 as the rotor spins around stationary stator 3256, the steam passes through intake hole 3268 into a rotor chamber 3270. Rotor 3258 is offset from a central axis Z so that, as rotor 3258 turns, the effective volume of rotor chamber 3270 decreases. In this way, steam is compressed to pressure P_2 as it is carried along a rotational path to an exit hole 3272 in rotor 3258. As rotor 3258 turns, exit hole 3272 lines up with an exit orifice 3274 of stationary exit 3264, and the steam at pressure P_2 passes through exit orifice 3274 into exit 3264 to be routed to the evaporator/condenser. In such an embodiment, rotatable housing 3254 rotates with water 3276 present in chamber 3260 thereby reducing frictional energy losses due to windage. There may also be a small hole 3278 present in the housing 3254 to permit water 3276 to leave and/or enter chamber 3260, thereby controlling the fluid level in the pump. In addition, rotor 3258 has multiple vanes 3280 that are readily apparent when rotor 3258 is viewed from above, as in FIG. 32G. Individual rotor chamber 3270, and individual intake hole 3268 and exit hole 3272 for each rotor chamber 3270, are also easily seen in this view.

[0488] Referring to FIG. 32H, Another alternative embodiment of a liquid ring pump, wherein the interface between rotatable housing 3254 and stator 3256 is conical rather than cylindrical. In this embodiment, a rotor drive shaft 3282 has an end 3286 situated upon a bearing 3284 that allows rotatable rotor housing 3254 to rotate with rotor 3258. Intake 3262 and exit 3264, with corresponding intake orifice 3266 and exit orifice 3274, are kept stationary with respect to rotor 3258 and rotor housing 3254.

[0489] Referring now to FIGS. 32F, H and I, other further embodiments may include either a conical or axial seal 3282 present between stationary sections 3264 and 3262 and rotor 3258. In the conical embodiment seen most clearly in FIG. 32I, seal 3282 thereby separates intake orifice 3266 from exit

orifice 3274 of rotor 3258 to prevent leaks. The liquid ring pumps shown in FIGS. 32E-I and 7 are both axially fed and radially ported, in contrast with the embodiment of a liquid ring pump, discussed with reference to FIGS. 32-32C (vide supra), which is axially fed and axially ported.

[0490] In alternate embodiments, the water vapor distillation apparatus may include a backpressure regulator. Backpressure regulators may assist with maintaining the safe and optimal operation of processes conducted under pressure. In operation the water vapor distillation apparatus may include a backpressure regulator to purify brackish or sea water into drinking water, excess apparatus pressure from start-up volatile components, or created from compressors running off-specification, may constitute a danger to operators if such pressure is not relieved in a safe manner. As well, volatile components present in feed streams at start-up may present contaminants that interfere with proper operation of the apparatus. Backpressure regulators may serve to relieve excess pressure, and to return an operating apparatus to a desired operating pressure.

[0491] The water vapor distillation apparatus embodiments described previously generally operate above atmospheric pressure, typically around 10 psig. Such an apparatus advantageously provides higher steam density at the higher pressure, thereby allowing more steam to be pumped through a positive displacement pump than at lower pressure. The resulting higher throughput provides overall improved system efficiency. Further, the higher throughput and higher system pressure reduces the power needed for compressor, and eliminates the need for two additional pumps—one for pumping condensed product and another for pumping blow-down stream. Overall construction is simplified, as many shapes withstand internal pressure better than external pressure. Importantly, operating at super-atmospheric pressure reduces the impact of minor leaks on the overall efficiency and performance. Non-condensable gases such as air inhibit the condensation process, and would be magnified at sub-atmospheric pressure, where minor leaks would serve to suck in air, something which will not occur in a system operating at super-atmospheric pressure.

[0492] Referring now to FIGS. 33 and 33A, these figures depict views of a backpressure regulator that may be incorporated into the water vapor distillation apparatus 100 when operating the apparatus above atmospheric pressure. The backpressure regulator 3300 has a vessel 3302 containing an orifice 3304. One side of the orifice is connected to a pressurized conduit of an apparatus (e.g., the outlet of a compressor in a vapor compression distillation apparatus) which may be exposed to the fluctuating elevated pressure. The other side of the orifice terminates in a port 3306. The port 3306 is covered by a movable stop 3308, in the shape of a ball. The stop 3308 is retained to an arm 3310 by means of a retainer 3312 at a fixed distance from a pivot pin 3314. The arm 3310 is attached by a hinge via the pivot pin 3314 to a point with a fixed relation to the orifice port 3306. The arm 3310 includes a counter mass 3316 suspended from the arm that is movable along an axis 3318 such that the distance between the counter mass 3316 and the pivot pin 3314 may be varied. In the embodiment shown in FIG. 33, the axial direction of the orifice 3304 is perpendicular to the direction of the gravitational vector 3320. The backpressure regulator may also include a housing, which prevents foreign matter from entering the regulator and interfering with the function of the internal components.

[0493] Still referring to FIGS. 33 and 33A, in operation the arm 3310 maintains a horizontal position with respect to the direction of gravity 3320 when the pressure in the pressurized conduit is below a given set point; this arm position, in this embodiment, is known as the closed position, and corresponds to the stop 3308 covering the port 3306. When the pressure in the conduit exceeds the set point, a force acts on the stop 3308, which results in a torque acting around the pivot pin 3314. The torque acts to rotate the arm 3310 around the pivot pin 3314 in a counter-clockwise direction, causing the arm to move away from its closed position and exposing the port 3306, which allows fluids to escape from the orifice 3304. When the pressure in the conduit is relieved below the set point, the force of gas is no longer sufficient to keep the arm 3310 away from its closed position; thus, the arm 3310 returns to the closed position, and the stop 3308 covers the port 3306.

[0494] Still referring to FIGS. 33 and 33A, the arm 3310 acts as a lever in creating adjustable moments and serves to multiply the force applied by the counter mass 3316 through the stop 3308 to the port 3306. This force multiplication reduces the weight needed to close the orifice 3304 as opposed to a design where the stop 3308 alone acts vertically on top of the orifice 3304, as in a pressure cooker. Thus a large port size, to promote expedited venting from a pressurized conduit, may be covered by a relatively lightweight, large-sized stop, the counter mass acting to adjust the desired set point; less design effort may be expended in choosing specific port sizes and stop properties. The addition of an axis 3318 for adjusting the position of the counter mass 3316, in the present embodiment, allows for changes in the multiplier ratio. As the counter mass 3316 is moved to a position closer to the pivot pin 3314, the multiplier ratio is reduced, creating a lower closing force. If the counter mass 3316 is moved farther from the pivot pin 3314, the multiplier ratio is increased, hence increasing the closing force. Therefore, the position of the counter mass 3316 effectively acts to adjust the set point of the backpressure regulator.

[0495] Adjustment of the backpressure regulator set point may be useful, when the backpressure regulator is utilized in apparatus at higher altitudes. When the atmospheric pressure is lower, the apparatus operating pressure is commensurately lower. As a result, the temperature of the distillation apparatus is lowered, which may adversely affect apparatus performance. As well, such adjustment allows one to identify set points for the backpressure regulator that are desired by the end user. The use of a counter mass to apply the closing force may also lower cost of the backpressure regulator and reduce component fatigue. In a particular embodiment, the adjustable counter mass is designed to allow a range of set points with a lowest set point substantially less than or equal to 10 psig and a highest set point substantially greater than or equal to 17 psig. Thus various embodiments allow for precise apparatus pressure regulation, unlike devices which act simply as safety relief valves.

[0496] Referring now to FIGS. 33B-C, these figures illustrate an alternate embodiment of the back pressure regulator 3300 having an orifice 3326 configured such that the port 3328 is oriented vertically with respect to the direction of gravity 3320. Thus other embodiments may accommodate any orifice orientation while maintaining the use of an adjustable counter mass.

[0497] The backpressure regulator may be configured to allow a small leakage rate below the set point in order to purge

the build up of volatile gases that act to insulate heat exchange and suppress boiling in a system; the regulator is designed, however, to allow-pressure to build in the pressurized conduit despite this small leakage. In one embodiment release of volatile components from a pressurized conduit, below the set point of the backpressure regulator, may also be achieved through a specifically-designed leak vent while the arm of the backpressure regulator is in the closed position. The leak vent is configured to allow a certain leakage rate from the port or the orifice while the pressure in the conduit is below the set point. Such leak vent may be designed by a variety of means known to those skilled in the art. Non-limiting examples include specific positioning of the stop and port to allow a small opening while the arm is in the closed position; designing the port such that a small opening, not coverable by the stop, is always exposed; specifying a particular rigid, non-compliant seal configuration between the stop and port when the arm is in the closed position; and configuring the orifice leading to the port to have a small opening to allow leakage of fluids.

[0498] Referring now FIGS. 33D-G, these figures illustrate alternate embodiments of the back pressure regulator 3300 allowing the leakage of volatiles below the set point. In one alternate embodiment, the port 3332 has a notch 3334 as shown in FIG. 33D and the close-up of region C of FIG. 33D depicted in FIG. 33E. Thus, when a stop is in contact with the port 3332, and the arm of the backpressure regulator is in the closed position, a leak vent is present at the position of the notch 3334 that allows a leakage of fluid. In another alternate embodiment of the backpressure regulator 3300, orifice 3336 has a small opening 3338, as depicted in FIG. 33F and blow tip of region E of FIG. 33F depicted in FIG. 33G. The opening 3338 is configured such that a leak vent is created when the stop covers the port 3336 since fluids may leak through the opening 3338.

[0499] Various features of a backpressure regulator may be altered or modified. For example, stops to be used with backpressure regulators may have any shape, size, or mass consistent with desired operating conditions, such stops need not be ball-shaped as shown in some embodiments discussed herein. As well, stops of different weight but similar sizes may be utilized with the retainer to alter the set point of the regulator. Similarly, counter masses of different sizes, shapes and masses may be utilized with various embodiments with preference that they are accommodated by the axis and arm configurations (compare 3316 in FIGS. 33 and 33A with 3330 in FIGS. 33B and 33C); such counter masses may be attached and oriented relative to the arm by any of a variety of techniques apparent to those skilled in the art. The pivot pin placement need not be positioned as shown in FIGS. 33-33C, but may be positioned wherever advantageous to provide the mechanical advantage required to achieve a particular pressure set point.

[0500] Referring back to FIG. 33, other embodiments of the backpressure regulator 3300 may optionally utilize the drain orifice feature described earlier. Also, embodiments of the backpressure regulator 3300 may not utilize the counter mass force adjustment feature, relying on the specific properties of a stop to provide the set point for the backpressure regulator.

[0501] Other embodiments of the water vapor distillation apparatus may not utilize a vessel, but rely on orifices that are intrinsically part of the system. In such instances, the backpressure regulator arm may be directly attached to a portion of

the system such that the arm, stop, and counter mass are appropriately oriented for the operation of the regulator.

[0502] Now referring to FIG. 34, the vessel 3302 includes a drain orifice 3322. Since the backpressure regulator 3300 may operate within a bounded region 3402 of a large system 3400, the drain orifice 3322 acts as a pathway to release fluids that are purged from the pressurized conduit 3404 through orifice 3304 into the bounded region 3402. The drain orifice 3322 may connect the bounded region 3402 to another area of the larger system, or to the external environment 3406. In addition, the build-up of gases in the bounded region 3402 may result in condensation of such gases. Also, gases purged through the orifice 3304 may be entrained with droplets of fluid that may accumulate in the bounded region 3402. Thus the drain orifice 3322 may also be used to purge any build up of condensables that accumulate in the bounded region 3402; the condensables may also be released from the bounded region using a separate orifice 3408.

[0503] Referring now to FIG. 35, in alternate embodiments the apparatus may maintain a constant blowdown water flow to prevent scaling and other accumulation in the apparatus as follows. Water level 3502 in head chamber 3504 is adjusted through a feedback control loop using level sensor L1, valve V1, and source pump 3506, to maintain proper water flow through the blowdown stream 3508. The three-way source pump fill valve 3510 is set to pump water into sump 3512, which causes water level 3502 in head chamber 3504 to rise. As fluid level 3502 rises in head chamber 3504, fluid overflows past a dam-like barrier 3514 into blowdown control chamber 3516 containing blowdown level sensor L1. As required, blowdown valve V1 is controlled to allow water flow from blowdown control chamber 3516 through heat exchanger 3518, to extract heat and cool blowdown stream 3508, and flow out valve V1, through volatile mixer 3520 allowing cooling of hot gases and steam 3522 from the evaporator section 3524, and then completing the blowdown stream, out to waste 3526.

[0504] Still referring to FIG. 35, the apparatus may also maintain proper product flow as follows. Product level 3528 builds up in condenser chamber 3530, and enters into product control chamber 3532, where product level sensor L2 is housed. Using a feedback control loop with level sensor L2 and valve V2, product stream 3534 is controlled to flow from product control chamber 3532 through heat exchanger 3518, to extract heat and cool product stream 3534, then through valve V2 and on out to complete the product stream as product water outlet 3536.

[0505] The system may preferably be configured to maintain proper liquid ring pump 3538 water level by the use of a fluid recovery system to replenish fluid loss. There are several ways that fluid from the ring pump may be depleted during system operation, including leakage into lower reservoir 3540, expulsion through exhaust port 3542, and evaporation. The leakage and expulsion losses may be large depending on operational parameters, such as the speed of rotation and liquid ring pump 3538 throughput. These leakage and expulsion losses could require total replacement of the fluid in the pump several times per hour. The evaporation loss is typically small.

[0506] Referring to FIG. 35, the fluid level in the ring pump 3538 may be maintained by adding additional source water, product water, or preferably by re-circulating liquid water lost from the liquid ring pump for improved system efficiency. In one embodiment the fluid level in the ring pump 3538 is

primarily maintained by re-circulation of the fluid accumulated in lower reservoir 3540. Fluid may accumulate in lower reservoir 3540 from leakage from the liquid ring pump 3538 and from fluid expelled in exhaust 3542, captured in mist eliminator 3544 and pumped to lower reservoir 3540. Alternatively, fluid expelled in exhaust 3542 and captured in mist eliminator 3544 may be returned via the liquid ring pump exhaust port. Fluid accumulated in lower reservoir may be re-circulated by one of several pumping mechanisms. One exemplary method is to use a siphon pump.

[0507] Still referring to FIG. 35, a minimum depth of water is preferably maintained in the lower reservoir for the siphon pump to perform properly. In one embodiment liquid ring pump control chamber 3546, which houses liquid ring pump level sensor L3 may be used to control the liquid ring pump level and control the level of water in the lower reservoir 3540. Liquid ring pump control chamber 3546 is fluidly connected to liquid ring pump 3538 and lower reservoir 3540. Liquid ring pump 3538 is connected to the three-way source fill valve 3510, which is set to open when the liquid ring pump 3538 requires more water and it is also connected to the liquid ring pump drain valve V3, which opens when it is required to drain water from liquid ring pump 3538 into blowdown stream 3508.

[0508] Still referring to FIG. 35, if re-circulated water from lower reservoir 3540 is not primarily used to maintain the fluid level in the liquid ring pump 3538, then either cold source water or product water could be used. In the event source water were used, the introduction of cold water (which could be approximately 85 degrees C. colder than system temperature) to the liquid ring pump 3538 would decrease system efficiency or alternatively the use of a pre-heater for such cold source water would increase the energy budget of the system. Alternatively, the use of product water, while not adversely affecting system temperature, could decrease production level and, thus, also lead to system inefficiency. At startup, the initial fluid level for the liquid ring pump is preferably supplied from source water.

[0509] Now referring to FIG. 35A, in one embodiment the start-up time may be reduced by using an external connecting valve 3550 between source 3548 and blowdown 3508 fluid lines, located adjacent to heat exchanger 3518, on the cold side. To determine the level of fluid in evaporator head 3504 during the initial fill, connecting valve 3550 would be open, blowdown valve BV would be closed, and fluid would be pumped into the system through source line 3548. Connecting blowdown 3508 and source 3548 lines results in equal fluid height in the blowdown level sensor housing 3516 and evaporator head 3504, thereby permitting a determination of fluid level in evaporator head 3504 and enabling the evaporator to be filled to the minimum required level at startup. Using the minimum level required shortens initial warm-up time and prevents spill-over from the evaporator head 3504 through the liquid ring pump 3538 to the condenser 3552 when the liquid ring pump 3538 starts illustrated on FIG. 35.

[0510] Still referring to FIG. 35A, the concentration of solids in blowdown stream 3508 may be monitored and controlled to prevent precipitation of materials from solution and thus clogging of the system. Also during start-up, circulating pump 3554 may circulate water through heat exchanger 3518 to pre-heat the heat exchanger to the proper temperature for normal operation. A conductivity sensor (not shown) may be used to determine total dissolved solid (TDS) content by measuring the electrical conductivity of the fluid. In a par-

ticular embodiment, the sensor is an inductive sensor, whereby no electrically conductive material is in contact with the fluid stream. If the TDS content in blowdown stream **3508** rises above a prescribed level, for example, during distillation of sea water, the fluid source feed rate is increased. Increasing the fluid source feed rate will increase the rate of blowdown stream **3508**, because distilled water production changes only slightly as a function of fluid feed rate, and an increased blowdown stream rate results in reduced concentration of TDS, thereby maintaining overall efficiency and productivity of the system.

[0511] Alternate embodiments may also include a fluid control system using level sensors and variable flow valves in a feedback configuration. Optimal operation of the still requires total fluid flow in to closely match total fluid flow out. Maintaining fluid levels in the still at near constant levels accomplishes this requirement. In a particular embodiment, the sensors are capacitive level sensors, a particularly robust sensor for measuring fluid levels. Capacitive level sensors have no moving parts and are insensitive to fouling, and manufacture is simple and inexpensive. Opening of a variable flow valve is controlled by the level of fluid measured by the capacitive level sensor, whereby the fluid level is adjusted at the level sensor location. A rising fluid level causes the valve to open more, increasing flow out of the sensor volume. Conversely, a falling fluid level causes the valve to close more, decreasing flow out of the sensor volume.

[0512] Flow rate through the variable flow control valves and from the input pump may be determined using an in-situ calibration technique. The level sensors and associated level sensor volume may be used to determine the fill or empty rate of the sensor volume. By appropriately configuring the control valves, the flow rate calibration of each valve and also of the source pump may be determined.

[0513] In one embodiment, a valve block (not shown) may be utilized to consolidate all control valves for the system into a single part, which may be integrated with the fluid flow manifold. A control system comprising a sensor for total dissolved solids and blowdown stream may also be incorporated, as well as a float valve or other device for controlling the height/level of fluid in the head.

[0514] Referring back to FIG. 35, there is additionally a steam flow line **3554** from head **3504** to compressor **3538**, a steam outlet **3542** for diverting steam to evaporator/condenser, a hot product line **3534** from evaporator/condenser leading through exchanger **3518**, which also allows for collection of hot purified condensed product **3528**, and a line (not shown) for diverting hot product to compressor **3538** to allow adjustment of water level to keep it constant. There may also be a drain line (not shown), for when the system is shut down.

[0515] Referring now to FIGS. 36-36C, alternate embodiments may also include a fluid distribution manifold **3600**. FIG. 36 shows one face of the pump side of one particular embodiment of a fluid distribution manifold **3600**. Input, in the form of raw source feed, flows through port **3602**, and blowdown stream (output) flows through port **3604**. Additional output in the form of product flows through port **3606**, while port/chamber **3608** provides the vent for volatiles (output) and port **3610** provides the drain (output) for liquid ring pump. FIG. 36A shows the other face of the pump side of the same particular embodiment of fluid distribution manifold **3600**. Port/chamber **3608**, for output of volatiles, is apparent, as is the drain **3610** for a liquid ring pump. In this view of this

particular embodiment, a condenser steam mist eliminator chamber **3612** is visible, as is a mist collector and drain area **3614**.

[0516] Referring specifically to FIG. 36B, this figure illustrates one face of the evaporator/condenser side of the same particular embodiment of fluid distribution manifold **3600**. Raw source feed port **3602**, as well as blowdown passage ports **3604** and product passage ports **3606** are readily visible in this view. In addition, evaporator steam passage port **3616** and condenser steam passage port **3618** may be seen.

[0517] Referring specifically to FIG. 36B, this figure illustrates the other face of the evaporator/condenser side of the same particular embodiment of fluid distribution manifold **3600**. Again blowdown passage port **3604** is visible, as is liquid ring pump drain port **3606**, a second condenser steam mist eliminator **3612**, evaporator steam mist eliminator **3620**, and mist collector and drain area **3614**. Also, a sump level control chamber can be seen in this view, along with a product level control chamber **3622** and a liquid ring pump supply feed **3624**.

[0518] Still referring to FIGS. 36-36C, a fluid distribution manifold **3600** is capable of eliminating most plumbing in a fluid purification system, advantageously incorporating various functionality in one unit, including flow regulation, mist removal, and pressure regulation, thereby simplifying manufacture and significantly reducing overall component parts. The core plates and manifolds may be made of, for example, plastic, metal, or ceramic plates, or any other non-corrosive material capable of withstanding high temperature and pressure. Methods of manufacture for the core plates and manifolds include brazing and over-molding.

[0519] Referring now to FIGS. 37-37A, these figures illustrate a fitting assembly that allows fluid interfacing throughout the system in a particular embodiment. For example, there may be a floating fluid interface between the exchanger **3518** (shown on FIG. 35) and the intake/exhaust ports **3220** and **3208** (shown on FIG. 32). FIG. 37A illustrates a connector **3702** that may be welded to the heat exchanger ports (not shown), wherein the connector **3702** connects to the fluid interface **3704** which is in turn in communication with the fluid distribution manifold. FIG. 37A shows a sectional view across line A-A (see FIG. 37). The connector **3702** has the ability to float to compensate for shifts in registration, possibly caused by temperature or manufacturing variations. Sealing is accomplished by the o-ring **3706**. As can be seen in the view depicted in FIG. 37, the o-ring seal **3706**, upon rotation of line A-A 90 degree about a central axis, the connector **3702** and the fluid interface **3704** lock together to make a fluid interface connection.

[0520] Referring now to FIGS. 38-38A, these figures illustrate another embodiment of the evaporator/condenser **3800**. As seen in FIG. 38, evaporator/condenser **3800** is a flat evaporator/condenser and contains multiple parallel core layers **3802** and **3804**, typically made of copper-nickel alloy or other heat-transferable material, with rib sections **3806** creating channels **3810** and **3812** for directing steam and condensed fluid flow. Steam intake **3814** and product exit **3816** manifolds (as well as dirty intake and volatile exit manifolds, not shown) may connect via a fluid interface to a liquid ring pump/compressor. Bolts **3818** secure core evaporator/condenser **3800** to brackets of external housing of the liquid ring pump/compressor. In operation, every alternating horizontal (as shown in FIGS. 38 and 38A) row **3802** and **3804** comprises evaporator channels **3810** and condenser channels

3812, such that the two functions never overlap on any given layer. FIG. 38A, a detail of FIG. 38, shows more clearly how the combined evaporator/condenser manifolds works. As indicated, rows **3802** do not interact with rows **3804**, they are closed off to each other, thereby separating the functions of evaporation and condensation in the horizontal core layers.

[0521] Referring now to FIG. 39, this figure illustrates alternate embodiment of the heat exchanger used in the water vapor distillation apparatus, wherein such heat exchangers capitalize on available systemic and heat sources. In one particular embodiment, heat from at least one of a plurality of sources passes through a multi-line heat exchanger **3902** such as depicted in FIG. 39, wherein a series of two-channel heat exchangers such as **3904**, **3906**, **3908**, and **3910** are plumbed to produce a multi-line effect. Note that in the particular multi-line heat exchanger embodiment shown in FIG. 39, the flow of cold intake **3912** passes through all heat exchanger units **3904**, **3906**, **3908**, and **3910**; one heat source, for example hot product **3914**, flows through heat exchanger units **3904** and **3908**; and another heat source, for example hot blowdown stream **3916**, flows through heat exchange units **3906** and **3910**. In this way, multiple heat sources may be used to exchange with the cold intake flow **3912**.

[0522] Now referring to FIG. 39A, this figure illustrates an alternate embodiment of the heat exchanger. In this embodiment, the heat exchanger may be a single multi-channel heat exchanger **3918**. In this particular embodiment, cold intake **3912**, and heat sources such as hot product **3914** and hot blowdown stream **3916**, for example, flow through exchanger **3918** simultaneously, but in opposite directions, thereby enabling heat exchange with cold intake **3912** from both heat sources **3914** and **3916** within a single heat exchanger **3912**.

[0523] Referring now to FIG. 40, one alternate embodiment may include measuring the evaporator and condenser pressures to assess overall system performance and/or provide data to a control system. To avoid the use of expensive sensors that would be required to withstand the elevated temperatures of evaporator/condenser **4002**, pressure sensors P_E and P_C are mounted on fluid lines between the cold side of heat exchanger **4004** and corresponding control valves V_E and V_C . To avoid measuring a pressure less than the actual pressure of the system, which would occur when fluid is flowing for pressure sensors located at this position, the control valve would be closed momentarily to stop flow. During the "no-flow" period, pressure will be constant from the control valve back to the evaporator or condenser, enabling accurate measurement of the system pressure. No adverse effects on still performance will occur from these short "no-flow" periods.

[0524] Referring now to FIGS. 41-41B, this figure illustrates another embodiment of the present disclosure including a filtering mechanism within intake to increase the purity of the final product fluid. A multi unit flip-filter **4100**, having a pivot joint **4102** joining at least two filter units **4104** and **4106**, is situated within a filter housing **4108** which directs fluid through filter units **4104** and **4106** and facilitates rotation of filter units **4104** and **4106** about central pivot joint **4102**. As shown, blowdown stream **4109** passes through flip-filter unit **4104**, while intake fluid stream **4110** simultaneously flows from intake through flip-filter unit **4106** en route to purification. After some interval a flip-filter switch (not shown), rotates flip-filter **4100** around its central axis, shown by the dotted line, at flip-filter pivot joint **4102**, such that filter unit **4106**, now fouled with contaminants filtered from dirty intake

fluid, is backwashed by blowdown stream **4109**, and filter unit **4104** becomes the filter unit which filters intake fluid stream **4110**. In such an embodiment, o-ring gaskets **4112** and **4114** may be utilized as seals between filter units **4104** and **4106** and the fluid flow routes of blow-down stream **4109** and intake fluid stream **4110**, respectively.

[0525] Referring now to FIGS. 41C-D, the multi-unit flip filter may be a multi-sected circular filter **4112**. Multi unit flip-filter **4112**, having a pivot point **4114** about which multiple flip-filter units such as **4116** and **4118** pivot, may also be situated within filter housing **4120** that directs fluid flow through individual filter units **4116** and **4118** and facilitates rotation of filter **4112** about pivot point **4114**. As shown, blowdown stream **4109** passing through one flip-filter unit **4116**, while intake fluid stream **4110** simultaneously flows from intake through flip-filter unit **4118** en route to purification. As in FIG. 41, a flip-filter switch (not shown), rotates flip-filter **4112** around its central axis, shown by the dotted line, at flip-filter pivot point **4114**, such that filter unit **4118**, now fouled with contaminants filtered from dirty intake fluid, is backwashed by blowdown stream **4109**, and filter unit **4116** becomes the filter unit which filters intake fluid stream **4110**. A series of seals, as indicated by **4122** and **4124**, are utilized between individual filter units **4116** and **4118**, to partition blowdown stream **4109** flowing through one filter section, from intake fluid stream **4110** flowing through another filter section.

[0526] Now referring to FIGS. 41E-41F, other embodiments may include a manual valve **4122** to change the direction of water flow. Such a valve allows use of, for example, blowdown stream **4109** to continuously clean one unit of each flip-filter, and with a single operation effectively switches which unit is being filtered and which unit is being back-washed, thereby back-washing filter units **4104** or **4106** without the need to actually flip filter **4100** itself. In one particular embodiment when valve **4122** is in position A, filter unit **4104** is filtering intake fluid **4110**, and filter unit **4106** is being back-washed with blowdown stream **4109**. Upon switching valve **4100** to position B, filter unit **4104** is now being back-washed by blowdown stream **4108**, and filter unit **4106** is now filtering input fluid **4110**.

Stirling Cycle Engine

[0527] The various embodiments of the water vapor distillation apparatus described above may, in some embodiment, may be powered by a Stirling cycle machine (also may be referred to as a Stirling engine). In the exemplary embodiment, the Stirling cycle machine is a Stirling engine described in pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/105,854 having Attorney Docket No. 170 filed on Apr. 18, 2008, which is herein incorporated by reference in its entirety. However, in other embodiments, the Stirling cycle machine may be any of the Stirling cycle machines described in the following references, all of which are incorporated by reference in their entirety: U.S. Pat. Nos. 6,381,958; 6,247,310; 6,536,207; 6,705,081; 7,111,460; and 6,694,731.

[0528] Stirling cycle machines, including engines and refrigerators, have a long technological heritage, described in detail in Walker, Stirling Engines, Oxford University Press (1980), incorporated herein by reference. The principle underlying the Stirling cycle engine is the mechanical realization of the Stirling thermodynamic cycle: isovolumetric heating of a gas within a cylinder, isothermal expansion of the gas (during which work is performed by driving a piston),

isovolumetric cooling, and isothermal compression. Additional background regarding aspects of Stirling cycle machines and improvements thereto is discussed in Hargreaves, *The Phillips Stirling Engine* (Elsevier, Amsterdam, 1991), which is herein incorporated by reference.

[0529] The principle of operation of a Stirling cycle machine is readily described with reference to FIGS. 51A-51E, wherein identical numerals are used to identify the same or similar parts. Many mechanical layouts of Stirling cycle machines are known in the art, and the particular Stirling cycle machine designated generally by numeral 5110 is shown merely for illustrative purposes. In FIGS. 51A to 51D, piston 5112 and a displacer 5114 move in phased reciprocating motion within the cylinders 5116 which, in some embodiments of the Stirling cycle machine, may be a single cylinder, but in other embodiments, may include greater than a single cylinder. A working fluid contained within cylinders 5116 is constrained by seals from escaping around piston 5112 and displacer 5114. The working fluid is chosen for its thermodynamic properties, as discussed in the description below, and is typically helium at a pressure of several atmospheres, however, any gas, including any inert gas, may be used, including, but not limited to, hydrogen, argon, neon, nitrogen, air and any mixtures thereof. The position of the displacer 5114 governs whether the working fluid is in contact with the hot interface 5118 or the cold interface 5120, corresponding, respectively, to the interfaces at which heat is supplied to and extracted from the working fluid. The supply and extraction of heat is discussed in further detail below. The volume of working fluid governed by the position of the piston 5112 is referred to as the compression space 5122.

[0530] During the first phase of the Stirling cycle, the starting condition of which is depicted in FIG. 51A, the piston 5112 compresses the fluid in the compression space 5122. The compression occurs at a substantially constant temperature because heat is extracted from the fluid to the ambient environment. The condition of the Stirling cycle machine 5110 after compression is depicted in FIG. 51B. During the second phase of the cycle, the displacer 5114 moves in the direction of the cold interface 5120, with the working fluid displaced from the region of the cold interface 5120 to the region of the hot interface 5118. This phase may be referred to as the transfer phase. At the end of the transfer phase, the fluid is at a higher pressure since the working fluid has been heated at constant volume. The increased pressure is depicted symbolically in FIG. 51C by the reading of the pressure gauge 5124.

[0531] During the third phase (the expansion stroke) of the Stirling cycle machine, the volume of the compression space 5122 increases as heat is drawn in from outside the Stirling cycle machine 5110, thereby converting heat to work. In practice, heat is provided to the fluid by means of a heater head (not shown) which is discussed in greater detail in the description below. At the end of the expansion phase, the compression space 5122 is full of cold fluid, as depicted in FIG. 51D. During the fourth phase of the Stirling cycle machine 5110, fluid is transferred from the region of the hot interface 5118 to the region of the cold interface 5120 by motion of the displacer 5114 in the opposing sense. At the end of this second transfer phase, the fluid fills the compression space 5122 and cold interface 5120, as depicted in FIG. 51A, and is ready for a repetition of the compression phase. The Stirling cycle is depicted in a P-V (pressure-volume) diagram as shown in FIG. 51E.

[0532] Additionally, on passing from the region of the hot interface 5118 to the region of the cold interface 5120. In some embodiments, the fluid may pass through a regenerator (shown as 5408 in FIG. 54). A regenerator is a matrix of material having a large ratio of surface area to volume which serves to absorb heat from the fluid when it enters from the region of the hot interface 5118 and to heat the fluid when it passes from the region of the cold interface 5120.

[0533] Stirling cycle machines have not generally been used in practical applications due to several daunting challenges to their development. These involve practical considerations such as efficiency and lifetime. Accordingly, there is a need for more Stirling cycle machines with minimal side loads on pistons, increased efficiency and lifetime.

[0534] The principle of operation of a Stirling cycle machine or Stirling engine is further discussed in detail in U.S. Pat. No. 6,381,958, issued May 7, 2002, to Kamen et al., which is herein incorporated by reference in its entirety.

Rocking Beam Drive

[0535] Referring now to FIGS. 52-54, embodiments of a Stirling cycle machine, according to one embodiment, are shown in cross-section. The engine embodiment is designated generally by numeral 5300. While the Stirling cycle machine will be described generally with reference to the Stirling engine 5300 embodiments shown in FIGS. 52-54, it is to be understood that many types of machines and engines, including but not limited to refrigerators and compressors may similarly benefit from various embodiments and improvements which are described herein, including but not limited to, external combustion engines and internal combustion engines.

[0536] FIG. 52 depicts a cross-section of an embodiment of a rocking beam drive mechanism 5200 (the term "rocking beam drive" is used synonymously with the term "rocking beam drive mechanism") for an engine, such as a Stirling engine, having linearly reciprocating pistons 5202 and 5204 housed within cylinders 5206 and 5208, respectively. The cylinders include linear bearings 5220. Rocking beam drive 5200 converts linear motions of pistons 5202 and 5204 into the rotary motion of a crankshaft 5214. Rocking beam drive 5200 has a rocking beam 5216, rocker pivot 5218, a first coupling assembly 5210, and a second coupling assembly 5212. Pistons 5202 and 5204 are coupled to rocking beam drive 5200, respectively, via first coupling assembly 5210 and second coupling assembly 5212. The rocking beam drive is coupled to crankshaft 5214 via a connecting rod 5222.

[0537] In some embodiments, the rocking beam and a first portion of the coupling assembly may be located in a crankcase, while the cylinders, pistons and a second portion of the coupling assembly is located in a workspace.

[0538] In FIG. 54 a crankcase 5400 most of the rocking beam drive 5200 is positioned below the cylinder housing 5402. Crankcase 5400 is a space to permit operation of rocking beam drive 5200 having a crankshaft 5214, rocking beam 5216, linear bearings 5220, a connecting rod 5222, and coupling assemblies 5210 and 5212. Crankcase 5400 intersects cylinders 5206 and 5208 transverse to the plane of the axes of pistons 5202 and 5204. Pistons 5202 and 5204 reciprocate in respective cylinders 5206 and 5208, as also shown in FIG. 52. Cylinders 5206 and 5208 extend above crankshaft housing 5400. Crankshaft 5214 is mounted in crankcase 5400 below cylinders 5206 and 5208.

[0539] FIG. 52 shows one embodiment of rocking beam drive 5200. Coupling assemblies 5210 and 5212 extend from pistons 5202 and 5204, respectively, to connect pistons 5202 and 5204 to rocking beam 5216. Coupling assembly 5212 for piston 5204, in some embodiments, may comprise a piston rod 5224 and a link rod 5226. Coupling assembly 5210 for piston 5202, in some embodiments, may comprise a piston rod 5228 and a link rod 5230. Piston 5204 operates in the cylinder 5208 vertically and is connected by the coupling assembly 5212 to the end pivot 5232 of the rocking beam 5216. The cylinder 5208 provides guidance for the longitudinal motion of piston 5204. The piston rod 5224 of the coupling assembly 5212 attached to the lower portion of piston 5204 is driven axially by its link rod 5226 in a substantially linear reciprocating path along the axis of the cylinder 5208. The distal end of piston rod 5224 and the proximate end of link rod 5226, in some embodiments, may be jointly hinged via a coupling means 5234. The coupling means 5234, may be any coupling means known in the art, including but not limited to, a flexible joint, roller bearing element, hinge, journal bearing joint (shown as 5600 in FIG. 56), and flexure (shown as 5700 in FIGS. 57A and 57B). The distal end of the link rod 5226 may be coupled to one end pivot 5232 of rocking beam 5216, which is positioned vertically and perpendicularly under the proximate end of the link rod 5226. A stationary linear bearing 5220 may be positioned along coupling assembly 5212 to further ensure substantially linear longitudinal motion of the piston rod 5224 and thus ensuring substantially linear longitudinal motion of the piston 5204. In an exemplary embodiment, link rod 5226 does not pass through linear bearing 5220. This ensures, among other things, that piston rod 5224 retains a substantially linear and longitudinal motion.

[0540] In the exemplary embodiment, the link rods may be made from aluminum, and the piston rods and connecting rod are made from D2 Tool Steel. Alternatively, the link rods, piston rods, connecting rods, and rocking beam may be made from 4340 steel. Other materials may be used for the components of the rocking beam drive, including, but not limited to, titanium, aluminum, steel or cast iron. In some embodiments, the fatigue strength of the material being used is above the actual load experienced by the components during operation.

[0541] Still referring to FIGS. 52-54, piston 5202 operates vertically in the cylinder 5206 and is connected by the coupling assembly 5210 to the end pivot 5236 of the rocking beam 5216. The cylinder 5206 serves, amongst other functions, to provide guidance for longitudinal motion of piston 5202. The piston rod 5228 of the coupling assembly 5210 is attached to the lower portion of piston 5202 and is driven axially by its link rod 5230 in a substantially linear reciprocating path along the axis of the cylinder 5206. The distal end of the piston rod 5228 and the proximate end of the link rod 5230, in some embodiments, is jointly hinged via a coupling means 5238. The coupling means 5238, in various embodiments may include, but are not limited to, a flexure (shown as 5700 in FIGS. 57A and 57B), roller bearing element, hinge, journal bearing (shown as 5600 in FIG. 56), or coupling means as known in the art. The distal end of the link rod 5230, in some embodiments, may be coupled to one end pivot 5236 of rocking beam 5216, which is positioned vertically and perpendicularly under the proximate end of link rod 5230. A stationary linear bearing 5220 may be positioned along coupling assembly 5210 to further ensure linear longitudinal motion of the piston rod 5228 and thus ensuring linear lon-

gitudinal motion of the piston 5202. In an exemplary embodiment, link rod 5230 does not pass through linear bearing 5220 to ensure that piston rod 5228 retains a substantially linear and longitudinal motion.

[0542] The coupling assemblies 5210 and 5212 change the alternating longitudinal motion of respective pistons 5202 and 5204 to oscillatory motion of the rocking beam 5216. The delivered oscillatory motion is changed to the rotational motion of the crankshaft 5214 by the connecting rod 5222, wherein one end of the connecting rod 5222 is rotatably coupled to a connecting pivot 5240 positioned between an end pivot 5232 and a rocker pivot 5218 in the rocking beam 5216, and another end of the connecting rod 5222 is rotatably coupled to crankpin 5246. The rocker pivot 5218 may be positioned substantially at the midpoint between the end pivots 5232 and 5236 and oscillatorily support the rocking beam 5216 as a fulcrum, thus guiding the respective piston rods 5224 and 5228 to make sufficient linear motion. In the exemplary embodiment, the crankshaft 5214 is located above the rocking beam 5216, but in other embodiments, the crankshaft 5214 may be positioned below the rocking beam 5216 (as shown in FIGS. 55B and 55D) or in some embodiments, the crankshaft 5214 is positioned to the side of the rocking beam 5216, such that it still has a parallel axis to the rocking beam 5216.

[0543] Still referring to FIGS. 52-54, the rocking beam oscillates about the rocker pivot 5218, the end pivots 5232 and 5236 follow an arc path. Since the distal ends of the link rods 5226 and 5230 are connected to the rocking beam 5216 at pivots 5232 and 5236, the distal ends of the link rods 5226 and 5230 also follow this arc path, resulting in an angular deviation 5242 and 5244 from the longitudinal axis of motion of their respective pistons 5202 and 5204. The coupling means 5234 and 5238 are configured such that any angular deviation 5244 and 5242 from the link rods 5226 and 5230 experienced by the piston rods 5224 and 5228 is minimized. Essentially, the angular deviation 5244 and 5242 is absorbed by the coupling means 5234 and 5238 so that the piston rods 5224 and 5228 maintain substantially linear longitudinal motion to reduce side loads on the pistons 5204 and 5202. A stationary linear bearing 5220 may also be placed inside the cylinder 5208 or 5206, or along coupling assemblies 5212 or 5210, to further absorb any angular deviation 5244 or 5242 thus keeping the piston push rod 5224 or 5228 and the piston 5204 or 5202 in linear motion along the longitudinal axis of the piston 5204 or 5202.

[0544] Therefore, in view of reciprocating motion of pistons 5202 and 5204, it is necessary to keep the motion of pistons 5202 and 5204 as close to linear as possible because the deviation 5242 and 5244 from longitudinal axis of reciprocating motion of pistons 5202 and 5204 causes noise, reduction of efficiency, increase of friction to the wall of cylinder, increase of side-toad, and low durability of the parts. The alignment of the cylinders 5206 and 5208 and the arrangement of crankshaft 5214, piston rods 5224 and 5228, link rods 5226 and 5230, and connecting rod 5222, hence, may influence on, amongst other things, the efficiency and/or the volume of the device. For the purpose of increasing the linearity of the piston motion as mentioned, the pistons (shown as 5202 and 5204 in FIGS. 52-54) are preferably as close to the side of the respective cylinders 5206 and 5208 as possible.

[0545] In another embodiment reducing angular deviation of link rods, link rods 5226 and 5230 substantially linearly

reciprocate along longitudinal axis of motion of respective pistons **5204** and **5202** to decrease the angular deviation and thus to decrease the side load applied to each piston **5204** and **5202**. The angular deviation defines the deviation of the link rod **5226** or **5230** from the longitudinal axis of the piston **5204** or **5202**. Numerals **5244** and **5242** designate the angular deviation of the link rods **5226** and **5230**, as shown in FIG. **52**. Therefore, the position of coupling assembly **5212** influences the angular displacement of the link rod **5226**, based on the length of the distance between the end pivot **5232** and the rocker pivot **5218** of the rocking beam **5216**. Thus, the position of the coupling assemblies may be such that the angular displacement of the link rod **5226** is reduced. For the link rod **5230**, the length of the coupling assembly **5210** also may be determined and placed to reduce the angular displacement of the link rod **5230**, based on the length of the distance between the end pivot **5236** and the rocker pivot **5218** of the rocking beam **5216**. Therefore, the length of the link rods **5226** and **5230**, the length of coupling assemblies **5212** and **5210**, and the length of the rocking beam **5216** are significant parameters that greatly influence and/or determine the angular deviation of the link rods **5226** and **5230** as shown in FIG. **52**.

[0546] The exemplary embodiment has a straight rocking beam **5216** having the end points **5232** and **5236**, the rocker pivot **5218**, and the connecting pivot **5240** along the same axis. However, in other embodiments, the rocking beam **5216** may be bent, such that pistons may be placed at angles to each other, as shown in FIGS. **55C** and **55D**.

[0547] Referring now to FIGS. **52-54** and FIGS. **57A-57B**, in some embodiments of the coupling assembly, the coupling assemblies **5212** and **5210**, may include a flexible link rod that is axially stiff but flexible in the rocking beam **5216** plane of motion between link rods **5226** and **5230**, and pistons **5204** and **5202**, respectively. In this embodiment, at least one portion, the flexure (shown as **5700** in FIGS. **57A** and **57B**), of link rods **5226** and **5230** is elastic. The flexure **5700** acts as a coupling means between the piston rod and the link rod. The flexure **5700** may absorb the crank-induced side loads of the pistons more effectively, thus allowing its respective piston to maintain linear longitudinal movement inside the piston's cylinder. This flexure **5700** allows small rotations in the plane of the rocking beam **5216** between the link rods **5226** and **5230** and pistons **5204** or **5202**, respectively. Although depicted in this embodiment as flat, which increases the elasticity of the link rods **5226** and **5230**, the flexure **5700**, in some embodiments, is not flat. The flexure **5700** also may be constructed near to the lower portion of the pistons or near to the distal end of the link rods **5226** and **5230**. The flexure **5700**, in one embodiment, may be made of #D2 Tool Steel Hardened to 58-62 RC. In some embodiments, there may be more than one flexure (not shown) on the link rod **5226** or **5230** to increase the elasticity of the link rods.

[0548] In alternate embodiment, the axes of the pistons in each cylinder housing may extend in different directions, as depicted in FIGS. **55C** and **55D**. In the exemplary embodiment, the axes of the pistons in each cylinder housing are substantially parallel and preferably substantially vertical, as depicted in FIGS. **52-54**, and FIGS. **55A** and **55B**. FIGS. **55A-55D** include various embodiments of the rocking beam drive mechanism including like numbers as those shown and described with respect to FIGS. **2-4**. It will be understood by those skilled in that art that changing the relative position of the connecting pivot **5240** along the rocking beam **5216** will change the stroke of the pistons.

[0549] Accordingly, a change in the parameters of the relative position of the connecting pivot **5240** in the rocking beam **5216** and the length of the piston rods **5224** and **5228**, link rods **5230** and **5226**, rocking beam **5216**, and the position of rocker pivot **5218** will change the angular deviation of the link rods **5226** and **5230**, the phasing of the pistons **5204** and **5202**, and the size of the device **5300** in a variety of manner. Therefore, in various embodiments, a wide range of piston phase angles and variable sizes of the engine may be chosen based on the modification of one or more of these parameters. In practice, the link rods **5224** and **5228** of the exemplary embodiment have substantially lateral movement within from -0.5 degree to $+0.5$ degree from the longitudinal axis of the pistons **5204** and **5202**. In various other embodiments, depending on the length of the link rod, the angle may vary anywhere from approaching 0 degrees to 0.75 degrees. However, in other embodiments, the angle may be higher including anywhere from approaching 0 to the approximately 20 degrees. As the link rod length increases, however, the crankcase/overall engine height increases as well as the weight of the engine.

[0550] One feature of the exemplary embodiment is that each piston has its link rod extending substantially to the attached piston rod so that it is formed as a coupling assembly. In one embodiment, the coupling assembly **5212** for the piston **5204** includes a piston rod **5224**, a link rod **5226**, and a coupling means **5234** as shown in FIG. **52**. More specifically, one proximal end of piston rod **5224** is attached to the lower portion of piston **5204** and the distal end piston rod **5224** is connected to the proximate end of the link rod **5226** by the coupling means **5234**. The distal end of the link rod **5226** extends vertically to the end pivot **5232** of the rocking beam **5216**. As described above, the coupling means **5234** may be, but is not limited to, a joint, hinge, coupling, or flexure or other means known in the art. In this embodiment, the ratio of the piston rod **5224** and the link rod **5226** may determine the angular deviation of the link rod **5226** as mentioned above.

[0551] In one embodiment of the machine, an engine, such as a Stirling engine, employs more than one rocking beam drive on a crankshaft. Referring now to FIG. **58**, an unwrapped "four cylinder" rocking beam drive mechanism **5800** is shown. In this embodiment, the rocking beam drive mechanism has four pistons **5802**, **5804**, **5806**, and **5808** coupled to two rocking beam drives **5810** and **5812**. In the exemplary embodiment, rocking beam drive mechanism **5800** is used in a Stirling engine comprising at least four pistons **5802**, **5804**, **5806**, and **5808**, positioned in a quadrilateral arrangement coupled to a pair of rocking beam drives **5810** and **5812**, wherein each rocking beam drive is connected to crankshaft **5814**. However, in other embodiments, the Stirling cycle engine includes anywhere from 1-4 pistons, and in still other embodiments, the Stirling cycle engine includes more than 4 pistons. In some embodiments, rocking beam drives **5810** and **5812** are substantially similar to the rocking beam drives described above with respect to FIGS. **52-54** (shown as **5210** and **5212** in FIGS. **52-54**). Although in this embodiment, the pistons are shown outside the cylinders, in practice, the pistons would be inside cylinders.

[0552] Still referring to FIG. **58**, in some embodiments, the rocking beam drive mechanism **5800** has a single crankshaft **5814** having a pair of longitudinally spaced, radially and oppositely directed crank pins **5816** and **5818** adapted for being journaled in a housing, and a pair of rocking beam drives **5810** and **5812**. Each rocking beam **5820** and **5822** is

pivotaly connected to rocker pivots **5824** and **5826**, respectively, and to crankpins **5816** and **5818**, respectively. In the exemplary embodiment, rocking beams **5820** and **5822** are coupled to a rocking beam shaft **5828**.

[0553] In some embodiments, a motor/generator may be connected to the crankshaft in a working relationship. The motor may be located, in one embodiment, between the rocking beam drives. In another embodiment, the motor may be positioned outboard. The term “motor/generator” is used to mean either a motor or a generator.

[0554] FIG. **59** shows one embodiment of crankshaft **5814**. Positioned on the crankshaft is a motor/generator **5900**, such as a Permanent Magnetic (“PM”) generator. Motor/generator **5900** may be positioned between, or inboard of the rocking beam drives (not shown, shown in FIG. **58** as **5810** and **5812**), or may be positioned outside, or outboard of, rocking beam drives **5810** and **5812** at an end of crankshaft **5814**, as depicted by numeral **51000** in FIG. **510A**.

[0555] When motor/generator **5900** is positioned between the rocking beam drives (not shown, shown in FIG. **58** as **5810** and **5812**), the length of motor/generator **5900** is limited to the distance between the rocking beam drives. The diameter squared of motor/generator **5900** is limited by the distance between the crankshaft **5814** and the rocking beam shaft **5828**. Because the capacity of motor/generator **5900** is proportional to its diameter squared and length, these dimension limitations result in a limited-capacity “pancake” motor/generator **5900** having relatively short length, and a relatively large diameter squared. The use of a “pancake” motor/generator **5900** may reduce the overall dimension of the engine, however, the dimension limitations imposed by the inboard configuration result in a motor/generator having limited capacity.

[0556] Placing motor/generator **5900** between the rocking beam drives exposes motor/generator **5900** to heat generated by the mechanical friction of the rocking beam drives. The inboard location of motor/generator **5900** makes it more difficult to cool motor/generator **5900**, thereby increasing the effects of heat produced by motor/generator **5900** as well as heat absorbed by motor/generator **5900** from the rocking beam drives. This may lead to overheating, and ultimately failure of motor/generator **5900**.

[0557] Referring to both FIGS. **58** and **59**, the inboard positioning of motor/generator **5900** may also lead to an unequilateral configuration of pistons **5802**, **5804**, **5806**, and **5808**, since pistons **5802**, **5804**, **5806**, and **5808** are coupled to rocking beam drives **5810** and **5812**, respectively, and any increase in distance would also result in an increase in distance between pistons **5802**, **5804**, and pistons **5806** and **5808**. An unequilateral arrangement of pistons may lead to inefficiencies in burner and heater head thermodynamic operation, which, in turn, may lead to a decrease in overall engine efficiency. Additionally, an unequilateral arrangement of pistons may lead to larger heater head and combustion chamber dimensions.

[0558] The exemplary embodiment of the motor/generator arrangement is shown in FIG. **51A**. As shown in FIG. **51A**, the motor/generator **51000** is positioned outboard from rocking beam drives **51010** and **51012** (shown as **5810** and **5812** in FIG. **58**) and at an end of crankshaft **51006**. The outboard position allows for a motor/generator **51000** with a larger length and diameter squared than the “pancake” motor/generator described above (shown as **5900** in FIG. **59**). As previously stated, the capacity of motor/generator **51000** is pro-

portional to its length and diameter squared, and since outboard motor/generator **51000** may have a larger length and diameter squared, the outboard motor/generator **51000** configuration shown in FIG. **510A** may allow for the use of a higher capacity motor/generator in conjunction with engine.

[0559] By placing motor/generator **51000** outboard of drives **51010** and **51012** as shown in the embodiment in FIG. **510A**, motor/generator **51000** is not exposed to heat generated by the mechanical friction of drives **51010** and **51012**. Also, the outboard position of motor/generator **1000** makes it easier to cool the motor/generator, thereby allowing for more mechanical engine cycles per a given amount of time, which in turn allows for higher overall engine performance.

[0560] Also, as motor/generator **51000** is positioned outside and not positioned between drives **51010** and **51012**, rocking beam drives **51010** and **51012** may be placed closer together thereby allowing the pistons which are coupled to drives **51010** and **51012** to be placed in an equilateral arrangement. In some embodiments, depending on the burner type used, particularly in the case of a single burner embodiment, equilateral arrangement of pistons allows for higher efficiencies in burner and heater head thermodynamic operation, which in turn allows higher overall engine performance. Equilateral arrangement of pistons also advantageously allows for smaller heater head and combustion chamber dimensions.

[0561] Referring again to FIGS. **58** and **59**, crankshaft **5814** may have concentric ends **5902** and **5904**, which in one embodiment are crank journals, and in various other embodiments, may be, but are not limited to, bearings. Each concentric end **5902**, **5904** has a crankpin **5816**, **5818** respectively, that may be offset from a crankshaft center axis. At least one counterweight **5906** may be placed at either end of crankshaft **5814** (shown as **51006** in FIG. **51A**), to counterbalance any instability the crankshaft **5814** may experience. This crankshaft configuration in combination with the rocking beam drive described above allows the pistons (shown as **5802**, **5804**, **5806**, and **5808** in FIG. **58**) to do work with one rotation of the crankshaft **5814**. This characteristic will be further explained below. In other embodiments, a flywheel (not shown) may be placed on crankshaft **5814** (shown as **51006** in FIG. **510A**) to decrease fluctuations of angular velocity for a more constant speed.

[0562] Still referring to FIGS. **58** and **59**, in some embodiments, a cooler (not shown) may be also be positioned along the crankshaft **5814** (shown as **51006** in FIG. **510A**) and rocking beam drives **5810** and **5812** (shown as **51010** and **51012** in FIG. **510A**) to cool the crankshaft **5814** and rocking beam drives **5810** and **5812**. In some embodiments, the cooler may be used to cool the working gas in a cold chamber of a cylinder and may also be configured to cool the rocking beam drive. Various embodiments of the cooler are discussed in detail below.

[0563] FIGS. **510A-510G** depict some embodiments of various parts of the machine. As shown in this embodiment, crankshaft **51006** is coupled to motor/generator **51000** via a motor/generator coupling assembly. Since motor/generator **51000** is mounted to crankcase **51008**, pressurization of crankcase with a charge fluid may result in crankcase deformation, which in turn may lead to misalignments between motor/generator **51000** and crankshaft **51006** and cause crankshaft **51006** to deflect. Because rocking beam drives **51010** and **51012** are coupled to crankshaft **51006**, deflection of crankshaft **51006** may lead to failure of rocking beam

drives **51010** and **51012**. Thus, in one embodiment of the machine, a motor/generator coupling assembly is used to couple the motor/generator **51000** to crankshaft **51006**. The motor/generator coupling assembly accommodates differences in alignment between motor/generator **51000** and crankshaft **51006** which may contribute to failure of rocking beam drives **51010** and **51012** during operation.

[0564] Still referring to FIGS. **510A-510G**, in one embodiment, the motor/generator coupling assembly is a spline assembly that includes spline shaft **51004**, sleeve rotor **51002** of motor/generator **51000**, and crankshaft **51006**. Spline shaft **51004** couples one end of crankshaft **51006** to sleeve rotor **51002**. Sleeve rotor **51002** is attached to motor/generator **51000** by mechanical means, such as press fitting, welding, threading, or the like. In one embodiment, spline shaft **51004** includes a plurality of splines on both ends of the shaft. In other embodiments, spline shaft **51004** includes a middle splineless portion **51014**, which has a diameter smaller than the outer diameter or inner diameter of splined portions **51016** and **51018**. In still other embodiments, one end portion of the spline shaft **51016** has splines that extend for a longer distance along the shaft than a second end portion **51018** that also includes splines thereon.

[0565] In some embodiments, sleeve rotor **51002** includes an opening **51020** that extends along a longitudinal axis of sleeve rotor **51002**. The opening **51020** is capable of receiving spline shaft **51004**. In some embodiments, opening **51020** includes a plurality of inner splines **51022** capable of engaging the splines on one end of spline shaft **51004**. The outer diameter **51028** of inner splines **51022** may be larger than the outer diameter **51030** of the splines on spline shaft **51004**, such that the fit between inner splines **51022** and the splines on spline shaft **51004** is loose (as shown in FIG. **510E**). A loose fit between inner splines **51022** and the splines on spline shaft **51004** contributes to maintain spline engagement between spline shaft **51004** and rotor sleeve **51002** during deflection of spline shaft **51004**, which may be caused by crankcase pressurization. In other embodiments, longer splined portion **51016** of spline shaft **51004** may engage inner splines **51022** of rotor **51002**.

[0566] Still referring to FIGS. **510A-510G**, in some embodiments, crankshaft **51006** has an opening **51024** on an end thereof, which is capable of receiving one end of spline shaft **51004**. Opening **51024** preferably includes a plurality of inner splines **51026** that engage the splines on spline shaft **51004**. The outer diameter **51032** of inner splines **51026** may be larger than the outer diameter **51034** of the splines on spline shaft **51004**, such that the fit between inner splines **51026** and the splines on spline shaft **51004** is loose (as shown in FIG. **510F**). As previously discussed, a loose fit between inner splines **51026** and the splines on spline shaft **51004** contributes to maintain spline engagement between spline shaft **51004** and crankshaft **51006** during deflection of spline shaft **51004**, which may be caused by crankcase pressurization. The loose fit between the inner splines **51026** and **51022** on the crankshaft **51006** and the sleeve rotor **51002** and the splines on the spline shaft **51004** may contribute to maintain deflection of spline shaft **51004**. This may allow misalignments between crankshaft **51006** and sleeve rotor **51002**. In some embodiments, shorter splined portion **51018** of spline shaft **51004** may engage opening **51024** of crankshaft **51006** thus preventing these potential misalignments.

[0567] In some embodiments, opening **51020** of sleeve rotor **51002** includes a plurality of inner splines that extend

the length of opening **51020**. This arrangement contributes to spline shaft **51004** being properly inserted into opening **51020** during assembly. This contributes to proper alignment between the splines on spline shaft **51004** and the inner splines on sleeve rotor **51002** being maintained.

[0568] Referring now to FIG. **54**, one embodiment of the engine is shown. Here the pistons **5202** and **5204** of engine **5300** operate between a hot chamber **5404** and a cold chamber **5406** of cylinders **5206** and **5208** respectively. Between the two chambers there may be a regenerator **5408**. The regenerator **5408** may have variable density, variable area, and, in some embodiments, is made of wire. The varying density and area of the regenerator may be adjusted such that the working gas has substantially uniform flow across the regenerator **5408**. Various embodiments of the regenerator **5408** are discussed in detail below, and in U.S. Pat. No. 6,591,609, issued Jul. 17, 2003, to Kamen et al., and No. 6,862,883, issued Mar. 8, 2005, to Kamen et al., which are herein incorporated by reference in their entireties. When the working gas passes through the hot chamber **5404**, a heater head **5410** may heat the gas causing the gas to expand and push pistons **5202** and **5204** towards the cold chamber **5406**, where the gas compresses. As the gas compresses in the cold chamber **5406**, pistons **5202** and **5204** may be guided back to the hot chamber to undergo the Stirling cycle again. The heater head **5410** may be a pin head (as shown in FIGS. **552A** through **553B**), a fin head (as shown in FIGS. **556A** through **556C**), a folded fin head (as shown in FIGS. **556A** through **556C**), heater tubes as shown in FIG. **54** (also shown as **2904** in FIG. **529**), or any other heater head embodiment known, including, but not limited to, those described below. Various embodiments of heater head **5410** are discussed in detail below, and in U.S. Pat. No. 6,381,958, issued May 7, 2002, to Kamen et al., No. 6,543,215, issued Apr. 8, 2003, to Langenfeld et al. No. 6,966,182, issued Nov. 22, 2005, to Kamen et al., and No. 7,308,787, issued Dec. 18, 2007, to LaRocque et al., which are herein incorporated by reference in their entireties.

[0569] In some embodiments, a cooler **5412** may be positioned alongside cylinders **5206** and **5208** to further cool the gas passing through to the cold chamber **5406**. Various embodiments of cooler **5412** are discussed in detail in the proceeding sections, and in U.S. Pat. No. 7,325,399, issued Feb. 5, 2008, to Strimling et al, which is herein incorporated by reference in its entirety.

[0570] In some embodiments, at least one piston seal **5414** may be positioned on pistons **5202** and **5204** to seal the hot section **5404** off from the cold section **5406**. Additionally, at least one piston guide ring **5416** may be positioned on pistons **5202** and **5204** to help guide the pistons' motion in their respective cylinders. Various embodiments of piston seal **5414** and guide ring **5416** are described in detail below, and in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/175,502, filed Jun. 19, 2002, published Feb. 6, 2003 (now abandoned), which is herein incorporated by reference in its entirety.

[0571] In some embodiments, at least one piston rod seal **5418** may be placed against piston rods **5224** and **5228** to prevent working gas from escaping into the crankcase **5400**, or alternatively into airlock space **5420**. The piston rod seal **5418** may be an elastomer seal, or a spring-loaded seal. Various embodiments of the piston rod seal **5418** are discussed in detail below.

[0572] In some embodiments, the airlock space may be eliminated, for example, in the rolling diaphragm and/or bel-

lows embodiments described in more detail below. In those cases, the piston rod seals **5224** and **5228** seal the working space from the crankcase.

[0573] In some embodiments, at least one rolling diaphragm/bellows **5422** may be located along piston rods **5224** and **5228** to prevent airlock gas from escaping into the crankcase **5400**. Various embodiments of rolling diaphragm **5422** are discussed in more detail below.

[0574] Although FIG. **54** shows a cross section of engine **5300** depicting only two pistons and one rocking beam drive, it is to be understood that the principles of operation described herein may apply to a four cylinder, double rocking beam drive engine, as designated generally by numeral **5800** in FIG. **58**.

Piston Operation

[0575] Referring now to FIGS. **58** and **511**, FIG. **11** shows the operation of pistons **5802**, **5804**, **5806**, and **5808** during one revolution of crankshaft **5814**. With a $\frac{1}{4}$ revolution of crankshaft **5814**, piston **5802** is at the top of its cylinder, otherwise known as top dead center, piston **5806** is in upward midstroke, piston **5804** is at the bottom of its cylinder, otherwise known as bottom dead center, and piston **5808** is in downward midstroke. With a $\frac{1}{2}$ revolution of crankshaft **5814**, piston **5802** is in downward midstroke, piston **5806** is at top dead center, piston **5804** is in upward midstroke, and piston **5808** is at bottom dead center. With $\frac{3}{4}$ revolution of crankshaft **5814**, piston **5802** is at bottom dead center, piston **5806** is in downward midstroke, piston **5804** is at top dead center, and piston **5808** is in upward midstroke. Finally, with a full revolution of crankshaft **5814**, piston **5802** is in upward midstroke, piston **5806** is at bottom dead center, piston **5804** is in downward midstroke, and piston **5808** is at top dead center. During each $\frac{1}{4}$ revolution, there is a 90 degree phase difference between pistons **5802** and **5806**, a 180 degree phase difference between pistons **5802** and **5804**, and a 270 degree phase difference between pistons **5802** and **5808**. FIG. **512A** illustrates the relationship of the pistons being approximately 90 degrees out of phase with the preceding and succeeding piston. Additionally, FIG. **511** shows the exemplary embodiment machine means of transferring work. Thus, work is transferred from piston **5802** to piston **5806** to piston **5804** to piston **5808** so that with a full revolution of crankshaft **5814**, all pistons have exerted work by moving from the top to the bottom of their respective cylinders.

[0576] Referring now to FIG. **511**, together with FIGS. **512A-512C**, illustrate the 90 degree phase difference between the pistons in the exemplary embodiment. Referring now to FIG. **512A**, although the cylinders are shown in a linear path, this is for illustration purposes only. In the exemplary embodiment of a four cylinder Stirling cycle machine, the flow path of the working gas contained within the cylinder working space follows a figure eight pattern. Thus, the working spaces of cylinders **51200**, **51202**, **51204**, and **51206** are connected in a figure eight pattern, for example, from cylinder **51200** to cylinder **51202** to cylinder **51204** to cylinder **51208**, the fluid flow pattern follows a figure eight. Still referring to FIG. **512A**, an unwrapped view of cylinders **51200**, **51202**, **51204**, and **51206**, taken along the line B-B (shown in FIG. **512C**) is illustrated. The 90 degree phase difference between pistons as described above allows for the working gas in the warm section **51212** of cylinder **51204** to be delivered to the cold section **51222** of cylinder **51206**. As piston **5802** and **5808** are 90 degrees out of phase, the working gas in the warm

section **51214** of cylinder **51206** is delivered to the cold section **51216** of cylinder **51200**. As piston **5802** and piston **5806** are also 90 degrees out of phase, the working gas in the warm section **51208** of cylinder **51200** is delivered to the cold section **51218** of cylinder **51202**. And as piston **5804** and piston **5806** are also 90 degrees out of phase, so the working gas in the warm section **51210** of cylinder **51202** is delivered to the cold section **51220** of cylinder **51204**. Once the working gas of a warm section of a first cylinder enters the cold section of a second cylinder, the working gas begins to compress, and the piston within the second cylinder, in its down stroke, thereafter forces the compressed working gas back through a regenerator **51224** and heater head **51226** (shown in FIG. **512B**), and back into the warm section of the first cylinder. Once inside the warm section of the first cylinder, the gas expands and drives the piston within that cylinder downward, thus causing the working gas within the cold section of that first cylinder to be driven through the preceding regenerator and heater head, and into the cylinder. This cyclic transmigration characteristic of working gas between cylinders **51200**, **51202**, **51204**, and **51206** is possible because pistons **5802**, **5804**, **5806**, and **5808** are connected, via drives **5810** and **5812**, to a common crankshaft **5814** (shown in FIG. **511**), in such a way that the cyclical movement of each piston is approximately 90 degrees in advance of the movement of the proceeding piston, as depicted in FIG. **512A**.

Rolling Diaphragm, Metal Bellows, Airlock, and Pressure Regulator

[0577] In some embodiments of the Stirling cycle machine, lubricating fluid is used. To prevent the lubricating fluid from escaping the crankcase, a seal is used.

[0578] Referring now to FIGS. **513A-515**, some embodiments of the Stirling cycle machine include a fluid lubricated rocking beam drive that utilizes a rolling diaphragm **51300** positioned along the piston rod **51302** to prevent lubricating fluid from escaping the crankcase, not shown, but the components that are housed in the crankcase are represented as **51304**, and entering areas of the engine that may be damaged by the lubricating fluid. It is beneficial to contain the lubricating fluid for if lubricating fluid enters the working space, not shown, but the components that are housed in the working space are represented as **51306**, it would contaminate the working fluid, come into contact with the regenerator **51308**, and may clog the regenerator **51308**. The rolling diaphragm **51300** may be made of an elastomer material, such as rubber or rubber reinforced with woven fabric or non-woven fabric to provide rigidity. The rolling diaphragm **51300** may alternatively be made of other materials, such as fluorosilicone or nitrile with woven fabric or non-woven fabric. The rolling diaphragm **51300** may also be made of carbon nanotubes or chopped fabric, which is non-woven fabric with fibers of polyester or KEVLAR®, for example, dispersed in an elastomer. In the some embodiments, the rolling diaphragm **51300** is supported by the top seal piston **51328** and the bottom seal piston **51310**. In other embodiments, the rolling diaphragm **51300** as shown in FIG. **13A** is supported via notches in the top seal piston **51328**.

[0579] In some embodiments, a pressure differential is placed across the rolling diaphragm **51300** such that the pressure above the seal **51300** is different from the pressure in the crankcase **51304**. This pressure differential inflates seal **51300** and allows seal **51300** to act as a dynamic seal as the pressure differential ensures that rolling diaphragm maintains

its form throughout operation. FIG. 513A, and FIGS. 513C-513H illustrate how the pressure differential effects the rolling diaphragm. The pressure differential causes the rolling diaphragm 51300 to conform to the shape of the bottom seal piston 51310 as it moves with the piston rod 51302, and prevents separation of the seal 51300 from a surface of the piston 51310 during operation. Such separation may cause seal failure. The pressure differential causes the rolling diaphragm 51300 to maintain constant contact with the bottom seal piston 51310 as it moves with the piston rod 51302. This occurs because one side of the seal 51300 will always have pressure exerted on it thereby inflating the seal 51300 to conform to the surface of the bottom seal piston 51310. In some embodiments, the top seal piston 51328 'rolls over' the corners of the rolling diaphragm 51300 that are in contact with the bottom seal piston 51310, so as to further maintain the seal 51300 in contact with the bottom seal piston 51310. In the exemplary embodiment, the pressure differential is in the range of 10 to 15 PSI. The smaller pressure in the pressure differential is preferably in crankcase 51304, so that the rolling diaphragm 51300 may be inflated into the crankcase 51304. However, in other embodiments, the pressure differential may have a greater or smaller range of value.

[0580] The pressure differential may be created by various methods including, but not limited to, the use of the following: a pressurized lubrication system, a pneumatic pump, sensors, an electric pump, by oscillating the rocking beam to create a pressure rise in the crankcase 51304, by creating an electrostatic charge on the rolling diaphragm 51300, or other similar methods. In some embodiments, the pressure differential is created by pressurizing the crankcase 51304 to a pressure that is below the mean pressure of the working space 51306. In some embodiments the crankcase 51304 is pressurized to a pressure in the range of 10 to 15 PSI below the mean pressure of the working space 51306, however, in various other embodiments, the pressure differential may be smaller or greater. Further detail regarding the rolling diaphragm is included below.

[0581] Referring now to FIGS. 513C, 513G, and 513H, however, another embodiment of the Stirling machine is shown, wherein airlock space 51312 is located between working space 51306 and crankcase 51304. Airlock space 51312 maintains a constant volume and pressure necessary to create the pressure differential necessary for the function of rolling diaphragm 51300 as described above. In one embodiment, airlock 51312 is not absolutely sealed off from working space 51306, so the pressure of airlock 51312 is equal to the mean pressure of working space 51306. Thus, in some embodiments, the lack of an effective seal between the working space and the crankcase contributes to the need for an airlock space. Thus, the airlock space, in some embodiments, may be eliminated by a more efficient and effective seal.

[0582] During operation, the working space 51306 mean pressure may vary so as to cause airlock 51312 mean pressure to vary as well. One reason the pressure may tend to vary is that during operation the working space may get hotter, which in turn may increase the pressure in the working space, and consequently in the airlock as well since the airlock and working space are in fluid communication. In such a case, the pressure differential between airlock 51312 and crankcase 51304 will also vary, thereby causing unnecessary stresses in rolling diaphragms 51300 that may lead to seal failure. Therefore, some embodiments of the machine, the mean pressure within airlock 51312 is regulated so as to maintain a constant

desired pressure differential between airlock 51312 and crankcase 51304, and ensuring that rolling diaphragms 51300 stay inflated and maintains their form. In some embodiments, a pressure transducer is used to monitor and manage the pressure differential between the airlock and the crankcase, and regulate the pressure accordingly so as to maintain a constant pressure differential between the airlock and the crankcase. Various embodiments of the pressure regulator that may be used are described in further detail below, and in U.S. Pat. No. 7,310,945, issued Dec. 25, 2007, to Gurski et al., which is herein incorporated by reference in its entirety.

[0583] A constant pressure differential between the airlock 51312 and crankcase 51304 may be achieved by adding or removing working fluid from airlock 51312 via a pump or a release valve. Alternatively, a constant pressure differential between airlock 51312 and crankcase 51304 may be achieved by adding or removing working fluid from crankcase 51304 via a pump or a release valve. The pump and release valve may be controlled by the pressure regulator. Working fluid may be added to airlock 51312 (or crankcase 51304) from a separate source, such as a working fluid container, or may be transferred over from crankcase 51304. Should working fluid be transferred from crankcase 51304 to airlock 51312, it may be desirable to filter the working fluid before passing it into airlock 51312 so as to prevent any lubricant from passing from crankcase 51304 into airlock 51312, and ultimately into working space 51306, as this may result in engine failure.

[0584] In some embodiments of the machine, crankcase 51304 may be charged with a fluid having different thermal properties than the working fluid. For example, where the working gas is helium or hydrogen, the crankcase may be charged with argon. Thus, the crankcase is pressurized. In some embodiments, helium is used, but in other embodiments, any inert gas, as described herein, may be used. Thus, the crankcase is a wet pressurized crankcase in the exemplary embodiment. In other embodiments where a lubricating fluid is not used, the crankcase is not wet.

[0585] In the exemplary embodiments, rolling diaphragms 51300 do not allow gas or liquid to pass through them, which allows working space 51306 to remain dry and crankcase 51304 to be wet sumped with a lubricating fluid. Allowing a wet sump crankcase 51304 increases the efficiency and life of the engine as there is less friction in rocking beam drives 51316. In some embodiments, the use of roller bearings or ball bearings in drives 51316 may also be eliminated with the use of lubricating fluid and rolling diaphragms 51300. This may further reduce engine noise and increase engine life and efficiency.

[0586] FIGS. 514A-514E show cross sections of various embodiments of the rolling diaphragm (shown as 51400, 51410, 51412, 51422 and 51424) configured to be mounted between top seal piston and bottom seal piston (shown as 51328 and 51310 in FIGS. 513A and 513H), and between a top mounting surface and a bottom mounting surface (shown as 51320 and 51318 in FIG. 513A). In some embodiments, the top mounting surface may be the surface of an airlock or working space, and the bottom mounting surface may be the surface of a crankcase.

[0587] FIG. 514A shows one embodiment of the rolling diaphragm 51400, where the rolling diaphragm 51400 includes a flat inner end 51402 that may be positioned between a top seal piston and a bottom seal piston, so as to form a seal between the top seal piston and the bottom seal piston. The rolling diaphragm 51400 also includes a flat outer

end **51404** that may be positioned between a top mounting surface and a bottom mounting surface, so as to form a seal between the top mounting surface and the bottom mounting surface. FIG. **514B** shows another embodiment of the rolling diaphragm, wherein rolling diaphragm **51410** may include a plurality of bends **51408** leading up to flat inner end **51406** to provide for additional support and sealing contact between the top seal piston and the bottom seal piston. FIG. **514C** shows another embodiment of the rolling diaphragm, wherein rolling diaphragm **51412** includes a plurality of bends **51416** leading up to flat outer end **51414** to provide for additional support and sealing contact between the top mounting surface and the bottom mounting surface.

[0588] FIG. **514D** shows another embodiment of the rolling diaphragm where rolling diaphragm **51422** includes a bead along an inner end **51420** thereof, so as to form an 'o-ring' type seal between a top seal piston and a bottom seal piston, and a bead along an outer end **51418** thereof, so as to form an 'o-ring' type seal between a bottom mounting surface and a top mounting surface. FIG. **514E** shows another embodiment of the rolling diaphragm, wherein rolling diaphragm **51424** includes a plurality of bends **51428** leading up to beaded inner end **51426** to provide for additional support and sealing contact between the top seal piston and the bottom seal piston. Rolling diaphragm **51424** may also include a plurality of bends **51430** leading up to beaded outer end **51432** to provide for additional support and sealing contact between the top seal piston and the bottom seal piston.

[0589] Although FIGS. **514A** through **514E** depict various embodiments of the rolling diaphragm, it is to be understood that rolling diaphragms may be held in place by any other mechanical means known in the art.

[0590] Referring now to FIG. **515A**, a cross section shows one embodiment of the rolling diaphragm embodiment. A metal bellows **51500** is positioned along a piston rod **51502** to seal off a crankcase (shown as **51304** in FIG. **513G**) from a working space or airlock (shown as **51306** and **51312** in FIG. **513G**). Metal bellows **51500** may be attached to a top seal piston **51504** and a stationary mounting surface **51506**. Alternatively, metal bellows **51500** may be attached to a bottom seal piston (not shown), and a top stationary mounting surface. In one embodiment the bottom stationary mounting surface may be a crankcase surface or an inner airlock or working space surface, and the top stationary mounting surface may be an inner crankcase surface, or an outer airlock or working space surface. Metal bellows **51500** may be attached by welding, brazing, or any mechanical means known in the art.

[0591] FIGS. **515B-515G** depict a perspective cross sectional view of various embodiments of the metal bellows, wherein the metal bellows is a welded metal bellows **51508**. In some embodiments of the metal bellows, the metal bellows is preferably a micro-welded metal bellows. In some embodiments, the welded metal bellows **51508** includes a plurality of diaphragms **51510**, which are welded to each other at either an inner end **51512** or an outer end **51514**, as shown in FIGS. **515C** and **515D**. In some embodiments, diaphragms **51510** may be crescent shaped **51516**, flat **51518**, rippled **51520**, or any other shape known in the art.

[0592] Additionally, the metal bellows may alternatively be formed mechanically by means such as die forming, hydro-forming, explosive hydroforming, hydramolding, or any other means known in the art.

[0593] The metal bellows may be made of any type of metal, including but not limited to, steel, stainless steel, stainless steel 374, AM-350 stainless steel, Inconel, Hastelloy, Haynes, titanium, or any other high-strength, corrosion-resistant material.

[0594] In one embodiment, the metal bellows used are those available from Senior Aerospace Metal Bellows Division, Sharon, Mass., or American BOA, Inc., Cumming, Ga.

Rolling Diaphragm and/or Bellows Embodiments

[0595] Various embodiments of the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows, which function to seal, are described above. Further embodiments will be apparent to those of skill in the art based on the description above and the additional description below relating to the parameters of the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows.

[0596] In some embodiments, the pressure atop the rolling diaphragm or bellows, in the airlock space or airlock area (both terms are used interchangeably), is the mean-working-gas pressure for the machine, which, in some embodiments is an engine, while the pressure below the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows, in the crankcase area, is ambient/atmospheric pressure. In these embodiments, the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows is required to operate with as much as 3000 psi across it (and in some embodiments, up to 1500 psi or higher). In this case, the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows seal forms the working gas (helium, hydrogen, or otherwise) containment barrier for the machine (engine in the exemplary embodiment). Also, in these embodiments, the need for a heavy, pressure-rated, structural vessel to contain the bottom end of the engine is eliminated, since it is now required to simply contain lubricating fluid (oil is used as a lubricating fluid in the exemplary embodiment) and air at ambient pressure, like a conventional internal combustion ("IC") engine.

[0597] The capability to use a rolling diaphragm and/or bellows seal with such an extreme pressure across it depends on the interaction of several parameters. Referring now to FIG. **515H**, an illustration of the actual load on the rolling diaphragm or bellows material is shown. As shown, the load is a function of the pressure differential and the annular gap area for the installed rolling diaphragm or bellows seal.

[0598] Region **1** represents the portions of the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows that are in contact with the walls formed by the piston and cylinder. The load is essentially a tensile load in the axial direction, due to the pressure differential across the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows. This tensile load due to the pressure across the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows can be expressed as:

$$L_t = P_d * A_a$$

[0599] Where

[0600] L_t = Tensile Load and

[0601] P_d = Pressure Differential

[0602] A_a = Annular Area

[0603] and

$$A_a = p/4 * (D^2 - d^2)$$

[0604] Where

[0605] D = Cylinder Bore and

[0606] d = Piston Diameter

[0607] The tensile component of stress in the bellows material can be approximated as:

$$S_t = L_t / (p * (D + d) * t_b)$$

[0608] Which reduces to:

$$S_t = P_d/4 * (D-d)/t_b$$

[0609] Later, we will show the relationship of radius of convolution, R_c , to Cylinder bore (D) and Piston Diameter (d) to be defined as:

$$R_c = (D-d)/4$$

[0610] So, this formula for S_t reduces to its final form:

$$S_t = P_d * R_c / t_b$$

[0611] Where

[0612] t_b = thickness of bellows material

[0613] Still referring to FIG. 515H, Region 2 represents the convolution. As the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows material turns the corner, in the convolution, the hoop stress imposed on the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows material may be calculated. For the section of the bellows forming the convolution, the hoop component of stress can be closely approximated as:

$$S_h = P_d * R_c / t_b$$

[0614] The annular gap that the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows rolls within is generally referred to as the convolution area. The rolling diaphragm and/or bellows fatigue life is generally limited by the combined stress from both the tensile (and hoop) load, due to pressure differential, as well as the fatigue due to the bending as the fabric rolls through the convolution. The radius that the fabric takes on during this 'rolling' is defined here as the radius of convolution, R_c .

$$R_c = (D-d)/4$$

[0615] The bending stress, S_b , in the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows material as it rolls through the radius of convolution, R_c , is a function of that radius, as well as the thickness of the materials in bending. For a fiber-reinforced material, the stress in the fibers themselves (during the prescribed deflection in the exemplary embodiments) is reduced as the fiber diameter decreases. The lower resultant stress for the same level of bending allows for an increased fatigue life limit. As the fiber diameter is further reduced, flexibility to decrease the radius of convolution R_c is achieved, while keeping the bending stress in the fiber under its endurance limit. At the same time, as R_c decreases, the tensile load on the fabric is reduced since there is less unsupported area in the annulus between the piston and cylinder. The smaller the fiber diameter, the smaller the minimum R_c , the smaller the annular area, which results in a higher allowable pressure differential.

[0616] For bending around a prescribed radius, the bending moment is approximated by:

$$M = E * I / R$$

[0617] Where:

[0618] M = Bending Moment

[0619] E = Elastic Modulus

[0620] I = Moment of Inertia

[0621] R = Radius of Bend

[0622] Classical bending stress, S_b , is calculated as:

$$S_b = M * Y / I$$

[0623] Where:

[0624] Y = Distance above neutral axis of bending

[0625] Substituting yields:

$$S_b = (E * I / R) * Y / I$$

$$S_b = E * Y / R$$

[0626] Assuming bending is about a central neutral axis:

$$Y_{max} = t_b / 2$$

$$S_b = E * t_b / (2 * R)$$

[0627] In some embodiments, rolling diaphragm and/or bellows designs for high cycle life are based on geometry where the bending stress imposed is kept about one order of magnitude less than the pressure-based loading (hoop and axial stresses). Based on the equation: $S_b = E * t_b / (2 * R)$, it is clear that minimizing t_b in direct proportion to R_c should not increase the bending stress. The minimum thickness for the exemplary embodiments of the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows material or membrane is directly related to the minimum fiber diameter that is used in the reinforcement of the elastomer. The smaller the fibers used, the smaller resultant R_c for a given stress level.

[0628] Another limiting component of load on the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows is the hoop stress in the convolution (which is theoretically the same in magnitude as the axial load while supported by the piston or cylinder). The governing equation for that load is as follows:

$$S_h = P_d * R_c / t_b$$

[0629] Thus, if R_c is decreased in direct proportion to t_b , then there is no increase of stress on the membrane in this region. However, if this ratio is reduced in a manner that decreases R_c to a greater ratio than t_b then parameters must be balanced. Thus, decreasing t_b with respect to R_c requires the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows to carry a heavier stress due to pressure, but makes for a reduced stress level due to bending. The pressure-based load is essentially constant, so this may be favorable—since the bending load is cyclic, therefore it is the bending load component that ultimately limits fatigue life.

[0630] For bending stress reduction, t_b ideally should be at a minimum, and R_c ideally should be at a maximum. E ideally is also at a minimum. For hoop stress reduction, R_c ideally is small, and t_b ideally is large.

[0631] Thus, the critical parameters for the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows membrane material are:

[0632] E , Elastic Modulus of the membrane material;

[0633] t_b , membrane thickness (and/or fiber diameter);

[0634] S_{ut} , Ultimate tensile strength of the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows; and

[0635] S_{lcf} , The limiting fatigue strength of the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows.

[0636] Thus, from E , t_b and S_{ut} , the minimum acceptable R_c may be calculated. Next, using R_c , S_{lcf} , and t_b , the maximum P_d may be calculated. R_c may be adjusted to shift the bias of load (stress) components between the steady state pressure stress and the cyclic bending stress. Thus, the ideal rolling diaphragm and/or bellows material is extremely thin, extremely strong in tension, and very limber in flexion.

[0637] Thus, in some embodiments, the rolling diaphragm and/or bellows material (sometimes referred to as a "membrane"), is made from carbon fiber nanotubes. However, additional small fiber materials may also be used, including, but not limited to nanotube fibers that have been braided, nanotube untwisted yarn fibers, or any other conventional materials, including but not limited to KEVLAR, glass, polyester,

synthetic fibers and any other material or fiber having a desirable diameter and/or other desired parameters as described in detail above.

Piston Seals and Piston Rod Seals

[0638] Referring now to FIG. 513G, an embodiment of the machine is shown wherein an engine 51326, such as a Stirling cycle engine, includes at least one piston rod seal 51314, a piston seal 51324, and a piston guide ring 51322, (shown as 51616 in FIG. 516). Various embodiments of the piston seal 51324 and the piston guide ring 51322 are further discussed below, and in U.S. Patent Application Publication No. US 2003/0024387 A1 to Langenfeld et al., Feb. 6, 2003 (now abandoned), which, as mentioned before, is incorporated by reference.

[0639] FIG. 516 shows a partial cross section of the piston 51600, driven along the central axis 51602 of cylinder, or the cylinder 51604. The piston seal (shown as 51324 in FIG. 513G) may include a seal ring 51606, which provides a seal against the contact surface 51608 of the cylinder 51604. The contact surface 51608 is typically a hardened metal (preferably 58-62 RC) with a surface finish of 12 RMS or smoother. The contact surface 51608 may be metal which has been case hardened, such as 8260 hardened steel, which may be easily case hardened and may be ground and/or honed to achieve a desired finish. The piston seal may also include a backing ring 51610, which is sprung to provide a thrust force against the seal ring 51606 thereby providing sufficient contact pressure to ensure sealing around the entire outward surface of the seal ring 51606. The seal ring 51606 and the backing ring 51610 may together be referred to as a piston seal composite ring. In some embodiments, the at least one piston seal may seal off a warm portion of cylinder 51604 from a cold portion of cylinder 51604.

[0640] Referring now to FIG. 517, some embodiments include a piston rod seal (shown as 51314 in FIG. 513G) mounted in the piston rod cylinder wall 51700, which, in some embodiments, may include a seal ring 51706, which provides a seal against the contact surface 51708 of the piston rod 51604 (shown as 51302 in FIG. 513G). The contact surface 51708 in some embodiments is a hardened metal (preferably 58-62 RC) with a surface finish of 12 RMS or smoother. The contact surface 51708 may be metal which has been case hardened, such as 58260 hardened steel, which may be easily case hardened and may be ground and/or honed to achieve a desired finish. The piston seal may also include a backing ring 51710, which is sprung to provide a radial or hoop force against the seal ring 51706 thereby providing sufficient contact hoop stress to ensure sealing around the entire inward surface of seal ring 51706. The seal ring 51706 and the backing ring 51710 may together be referred to as a piston rod seal composite ring.

[0641] In some embodiments, the seal ring and the backing ring may be positioned on a piston rod, with the backing exerting an outward pressure on the seal ring, and the seal ring may come into contact with a piston rod cylinder wall 51702. These embodiments require a larger piston rod cylinder length than the previous embodiment. This is because the contact surface on the piston rod cylinder wall 51702 will be longer than in the previous embodiment, where the contact surface 51708 lies on the piston rod itself. In yet another embodiment, piston rod seals may be any functional seal known in the art including, but not limited to, an o-ring, a graphite clearance seal, graphite piston in a glass cylinder, or

any air pot, or a spring energized lip seal. In some embodiments, anything having a close clearance may be used, in other embodiments, anything having interference, for example, a seal, is used. In the exemplary embodiment, a spring energized lip seal is used. Any spring energized lip seal may be used, including those made by BAL SEAL Engineering, Inc., Foothill Ranch, Calif. In some embodiments, the seal used is a BAL SEAL Part Number X558604.

[0642] The material of the seal rings 51606 and 51706 is chosen by considering a balance between the coefficient of friction of the seal rings 51606 and 51706 against the contact surfaces 51608 and 51708, respectively, and the wear on the seal rings 51606 and 51706 it engenders. In applications in which piston lubrication is not possible, such as at the high operating temperatures of a Stirling cycle engine, the use of engineering plastic rings is used. The embodiments of the composition include a nylon matrix loaded with a lubricating and wear-resistant material. Examples of such lubricating materials include PTFE/silicone, PTFE, graphite, etc. Examples of wear-resistant materials include glass fibers and carbon fibers. Examples of such engineering plastics are manufactured by LNP Engineering Plastics, Inc. of Exton, Pa. Backing rings 51610 and 51710 is preferably metal.

[0643] The fit between the seal rings 51606 and 51706 and the seal ring grooves 51612 and 51712, respectively, is preferably a clearance fit (about 0.002"), while the fit of the backing rings 51610 and 51710 is preferably a looser fit, of the order of about 0.005" in some embodiments. The seal rings 51606 and 51706 provide a pressure seal against the contact surfaces 51608 and 51708, respectively, and also one of the surfaces 51614 and 51714 of the seal ring grooves 51612 and 51712, respectively, depending on the direction of the pressure difference across the rings 51606 and 51706 and the direction of the piston 51600 or the piston rod 51704 travel.

[0644] FIGS. 518A and 518B show that if the backing ring 51820 is essentially circularly symmetrical, but for the gap 51800, it will assume, upon compression, an oval shape, as shown by the dashed backing ring 51802. The result may be an uneven radial or hoop force (depicted by arrows 51804) exerted on the seal ring (not shown, shown as 51606 and 51706 in FIGS. 516 and 517), and thus an uneven pressure of the seal rings against the contact surfaces (not shown, shown as 51608 and 51708 in FIGS. 516 and 517) respectively, causing uneven wear of the seal rings and in some cases, failure of the seals.

[0645] A solution to the problem of uneven radial or hoop force exerted by the piston seal backing ring 51820, in accordance with an embodiment, is a backing ring 51822 having a cross-section varying with circumferential displacement from the gap 51800, as shown in FIGS. 518C and 518D. A tapering of the width of the backing ring 51822 is shown from the position denoted by numeral 51806 to the position denoted by numeral 51808. Also shown in FIGS. 518C and 518D is a lap joint 51810 providing for circumferential closure of the seal ring 51606. As some seals will wear significantly over their lifetime, the backing ring 51822 should provide an even pressure (depicted by numeral 51904 in FIG. 519B) of a range of movement. The tapered backing ring 51822 shown in FIGS. 518C and 518D may provide this advantage.

[0646] FIGS. 519A and 519B illustrate another solution to the problem of uneven radial or hoop force of the piston seal ring against the piston cylinder, in accordance with some

embodiments. As shown in FIG. 519A, backing ring 51910 is fashioned in an oval shape, so that upon compression within the cylinder, the ring assumes the circular shape shown by dashed backing ring 51902. A constant contact pressure between the seal ring and the cylinder contact surface may thus be provided by an even radial force 51904 of backing ring 51902, as shown in FIG. 519B.

[0647] A solution to the problem of uneven radial or hoop force exerted by the piston rod seal backing ring, in accordance with some embodiments, is a backing ring 51824 having a cross-section varying with circumferential displacement from gap 51812, as shown in FIGS. 518E and 518F. A tapering of the width of backing ring 51824 is shown from the position denoted by numeral 51814 to the position denoted by numeral 51816. Also shown in FIGS. 518E and 518F is a lap joint 51818 providing for circumferential closure of seal ring 51706. As some seals will wear significantly over their lifetime, backing ring 51824 should provide an even pressure (depicted by numeral 52004 in FIG. 520B) of a range of movement. The tapered backing ring 51824 shown in FIGS. 518E and 518F may provide this advantage.

[0648] FIGS. 520A and 520B illustrate another solution to the problem of uneven radial or hoop force of the piston rod seal ring against the piston rod contact surface, in accordance with some embodiments. As shown in FIG. 520A, backing ring (shown by dashed backing ring 52000) is fashioned as an oval shape, so that upon expansion within the cylinder, the ring assumes the circular shape shown by backing ring 52002. A constant contact pressure between the seal ring 51706 and the cylinder contact surface may thus be provided by an even radial thrust force 52004 of backing ring 52002, as shown in FIG. 520B.

[0649] Referring again to FIG. 516, at least one guide ring 51616 may also be provided, in accordance with some embodiments, for bearing any side load on piston 51600 as it moves up and down the cylinder 51604. Guide ring 51616 is also preferably fabricated from an engineering plastic material loaded with a lubricating material. A perspective view of guide ring 51616 is shown in FIG. 521. An overlapping joint 52100 is shown and may be diagonal to the central axis of guide ring 51616.

Lubricating Fluid Pump and Lubricating Fluid Passageways

[0650] Referring now to FIG. 522, a representative illustration of one embodiment of the engine 52200 for the machine is shown having a rocking beam drive 52202 and lubricating fluid 52204. In some embodiments, the lubricating fluid is oil. The lubricating fluid is used to lubricate engine parts in the crankcase 52206, such as hydrodynamic pressure fed lubricated bearings. Lubricating the moving parts of the engine 52200 serves to further reduce friction between engine parts and further increase engine efficiency and engine life. In some embodiments, lubricating fluid may be placed at the bottom of the engine, also known as an oil sump, and distributed throughout the crankcase. The lubricating fluid may be distributed to the different parts of the engine 52200 by way of a lubricating fluid pump, wherein the lubricating fluid pump may collect lubricating fluid from the sump via a filtered inlet. In the exemplary embodiment, the lubricating fluid is oil and thus, the lubricating fluid pump is herein referred to as an oil pump. However, the term "oil pump" is used only to describe the exemplary embodiment and other embodiments where oil

is used as a lubricating fluid, and the term shall not be construed to limit the lubricating fluid or the lubricating fluid pump.

[0651] Referring now to FIGS. 523A and 523B, one embodiment of the engine is shown, wherein lubricating fluid is distributed to different parts of the engine 52200 that are located in the crankcase 52206 by a mechanical oil pump 52208. The oil pump 52208 may include a drive gear 52210 and an idle gear 52212. In some embodiments, the mechanical oil pump 52208 may be driven by a pump drive assembly. The pump drive assembly may include a drive shaft 52214 coupled to a drive gear 52210, wherein the drive shaft 52214 includes an intermediate gear 52216 thereon. The intermediate gear 52216 is preferably driven by a crankshaft gear 52220, wherein the crankshaft gear 52220 is coupled to the primary crankshaft 52218 of the engine 52200, as shown in FIG. 524. In this configuration, the crankshaft 52218 indirectly drives the mechanical oil pump 52208 via the crankshaft gear 52220, which drives the intermediate gear 52216 on the drive shaft 52214, which, in turn, drives the drive gear 52210 of the oil pump 52208.

[0652] The crankshaft gear 52220 may be positioned between the crankpins 52222 and 52224 of crankshaft 52218 in some embodiments, as shown in FIG. 24. In other embodiments, the crankshaft gear 52220 may be placed at an end of the crankshaft 52218, as shown in FIGS. 525A-525C.

[0653] For ease of manufacturing, the crankshaft 52218 may be composed of a plurality of pieces. In these embodiments, the crankshaft gear 52220 may be to be inserted between the crankshaft pieces during assembly of the crankshaft.

[0654] The drive shaft 52214, in some embodiments, may be positioned perpendicularly to the crankshaft 52218, as shown in FIGS. 523A and 525A. However, in some embodiments, the drive shaft 52214 may be positioned parallel to the crankshaft 52218, as shown in FIGS. 525B and 525C.

[0655] In some embodiments, the crankshaft gear 52234 and the intermediate gear 52232 may be sprockets, wherein the crankshaft gear 52234 and the intermediate gear 52232 are coupled by a chain 52226, as shown in FIGS. 525C and 526C. In such an embodiment, the chain 52226 is used to drive a chain drive pump (shown as 52600 in FIGS. 526A through 526C).

[0656] In some embodiments, the gear ratio between the crankshaft 52218 and the drive shaft 52214 remains constant throughout operation. In such an embodiment, it is important to have an appropriate gear ratio between the crankshaft and the drive shaft, such that the gear ratio balances the pump speed and the speed of the engine. This achieves a specified flow of lubricant required by a particular engine RPM (revolutions per minute) operating range.

[0657] In some embodiments, lubricating fluid is distributed to different parts of an engine by an electric pump. The electric pump eliminates the need for a pump drive assembly, which is otherwise required by a mechanical oil pump.

[0658] Referring back to FIGS. 523A and 523B, the oil pump 52208 may include an inlet 52228 to collect lubricating fluid from the sump and an outlet 52230 to deliver lubricating fluid to the various parts of the engine. In some embodiments, the rotation of the drive gear 52212 and the idle gear 52210 cause the lubricating fluid from the sump to be drawn into the oil pump through the inlet 52228 and forced out of the pump through the outlet 52230. The inlet 52228 preferably includes a filter to remove particulates that may be found in the lubri-

ating fluid prior to its being drawn into the oil pump. In some embodiments, the inlet **52228** may be connected to the sump via a tube, pipe, or hose. In some embodiments, the inlet **52228** may be in direct fluid communication with the sump.

[0659] In some embodiments, the oil pump outlet **52230** is connected to a series of passageways in the various engine parts, through which the lubricating fluid is delivered to the various engine parts. The outlet **52230** may be integrated with the passageways so as to be in direct communication with the passageways, or may be connected to the passageways via a hose or tube, or a plurality of hoses or tubes. The series of passageways are preferably an interconnected network of passageways, so that the outlet **52230** may be connected to a single passageway inlet and still be able to deliver lubricating fluid to the engine's lubricated parts.

[0660] FIGS. **527A-527D** show one embodiment, wherein the oil pump outlet (shown as **52230** in FIG. **523B**) is connected to a passageway **52700** in the rocker shaft **52702** of the rocking beam drive **52704**. The rocker shaft passageway **52700** delivers lubricating fluid to the rocker pivot bearings **52706**, and is connected to and delivers lubricating fluid to the rocking beam passageways (not shown). The rocking beam passageways deliver lubricating fluid to the connecting wrist pin bearings **52708**, the link rod bearings **52710**, and the link rod passageways **52712**. The link rod passageways **52712** deliver lubricating fluid to the piston rod coupling bearing **52714**. The connecting rod passageway (not shown) of the connecting rod **52720** delivers lubricating fluid to a first crank pin **52722** and the crankshaft passageway **52724** of the crankshaft **52726**. The crankshaft passageway **52724** delivers lubricating fluid to the crankshaft journal bearings **52728**, the second crank pin bearing **52730**, and the spline shaft passageway **52732**. The spline shaft passageway **52732** delivers lubricating fluid to the spline shaft spline joints **52734** and **52736**. The oil pump outlet (not shown, shown in FIG. **523B** as **52230**) in some embodiments is connected to the main feed **52740**. In some embodiments, an oil pump outlet may also be connected to and provide lubricating fluid to the coupling joint linear bearings **52738**. In some embodiments, an oil pump outlet may be connected to the linear bearings **52738** via a tube or hose, or plurality of tubes or hoses. Alternatively, the link rod passageways **52712** may deliver lubricating fluid to the linear bearings **52738**.

[0661] Thus, the main feed **52740** delivers lubricating fluid to the journal bearings surfaces **52728**. From the journal bearing surfaces **52728**, the lubricating fluid is delivered to the crankshaft main passage. The crankshaft main passage delivers lubricating fluid to both the spline shaft passageway **52732** and the connecting rod bearing on the crank pin **52724**.

[0662] Lubricating fluid is delivered back to the sump, preferably by flowing out of the aforementioned bearings and into the sump. In the sump, the lubricating fluid will be collected by the oil pump and redistributed throughout the engine.

Distribution

[0663] As described above, various embodiments of the system, methods and apparatus may advantageously provide a low-cost, easily maintained, highly efficient, portable, and failsafe system that can provide a reliable source of drinking water for use in all environments regardless of initial water quality. The system is intended to produce a continuous stream of potable water, for drinking or medical applications, for example, on a personal or limited community scale using a portable power source and moderate power budget. As an

example, in some embodiment, the water vapor distillation apparatus may be utilized to produce at least approximately 10 gallons of water per hour on a power budget of approximately 500 watts. This may be achieved through a very efficient heat transfer process and a number of sub-system design optimizations.

[0664] The various embodiments of the water vapor distillation apparatus may be powered by a battery, electricity source or by a generator, as described herein. The battery may be a stand alone battery or could be connected to a motor transport apparatus, such as a scooter, any other motor vehicle, which some cases may be a hybrid motor vehicle or a battery powered vehicle.

[0665] In one embodiment, the system may be used in the developing world or in a remote village or remote living quarters. The system is especially advantageous in communities with any one or more of the following, for example (but not by limitation): unsafe water of any kind at any time, little to no water technical expertise for installation, unreliable access to replacement supplies, limited access to maintenance and difficult operating environment.

[0666] The system acts to purify any input source and transform the input source to high-quality output, i.e., cleaner water. In some applications the water vapor distillation apparatus may be in a community that does not have any municipal infrastructure to provide source water. Thus, in these situations an embodiment of the water vapor distillation apparatus may be capable of accepting source water having varying qualities of purity.

[0667] The system is also easy to install and operate. The water vapor distillation apparatus is designed to be an autonomous system. This apparatus may operate independently without having to be monitored by operators. This is important because, in many of the locations where the water vapor distillation apparatus may be installed and or utilized, mechanics may be rare or unreliable.

[0668] The system has minimal maintenance requirement. In the exemplary embodiments, the system does not require any consumables and/or disposables, thus, the system itself may be utilized for a period of time absent replacing any elements or parts. This is important because in many applications the water vapor distillation apparatus may be located in a community that lacks people having technical expertise to maintain mechanical devices such as the water vapor distillation apparatus. The system is also inexpensive, making it an option for any community.

[0669] In addition, the water vapor distillation apparatus may be used in any community where clean drinking water is not readily or sufficiently available. For example, communities that have both a utility to provide electricity to operate the water vapor distillation device and municipal water to supply the apparatus.

[0670] Thus, the water vapor distillation apparatus may be used in communities that may have a utility grid for supply electricity but no clean drinking water. Conversely, the community may have municipal water that is not safe and no utility grid to supply electricity. In these applications, the water vapor distillation apparatus may be powered using devices including, but not limited to a Stirling engine, an internal combustion engine, a generator, batteries or solar panels. Sources of water may include but are not limited to local streams, rivers, lakes, ponds, or wells, as well as, the ocean.

[0671] In communities that have no infrastructure the challenge is to locate a water source and be able to supply power to operate the water vapor distillation apparatus. As previously discussed, the water vapor distillation apparatus may be power using several types of devices.

[0672] In this type of situation one likely place to install a water vapor distillation apparatus may be in the community clinic or health centers. These places typically have some form of power source and are accessible to the most members of the community.

[0673] Again, as described herein, sources of electricity may include a Stirling engine. This type of engine is well suited for application in the water machine because the engine provides a sufficient amount of electrical power to operate the machine without significantly affecting the size of the machine.

[0674] The water vapor distillation apparatus may supply approximately between 50 and 250 people per day with water. In the exemplary embodiment, the output is 30 liters per hour. This production rate is suitable for a small village or community's needs. The energy needs include approximately 900 Watts. Thus, the energy requirements are minimal to power the water vapor distillation apparatus. This low power requirement is suitable to a small/remote village or community. Also, in some embodiments, a standard outlet is suitable as the electrical source. The weight of the water vapor distillation apparatus is approximately 90 Kg, in the exemplary embodiment, and the size (HxDxW)—160 cm×50 cm×50 cm.

[0675] Knowledge of operating temperatures, TDS, and fluid flows provides information to allow production of potable water under a wide range of ambient temperatures, pressures, and dissolved solid content of the source water. One particular embodiment may utilize a control method whereby such measurements (T, P, TDS, flow rates, etc) are used in conjunction with a simple algorithm and look-up table allowing an operator or computer controller to set operating parameters for optimum performance under existing ambient conditions.

[0676] In some embodiments, the apparatus may be incorporated as part of a system for distributing water. Within this system may include a monitoring system. This monitoring system may include, but is not limited to having an input sensor for measuring one or more characteristics of the input to the generation device and an output sensor for measuring consumption or other characteristic of output from the generation device. The monitoring system may have a controller for concatenating measured input and consumption of output on the basis of the input and output sensors.

[0677] Where the generation device of a particular utility of a network is a water vapor distillation apparatus, the input sensor may be a flow rate monitor. Moreover, the output sensor may be a water quality sensor including one or more of turbidity, conductivity, and temperature sensors.

[0678] The monitoring system may also have a telemetry module for communicating measured input and output parameters to a remote site, either directly or via an intermediary device such as a satellite, and, moreover, the system may include a remote actuator for varying operating parameters of the generator based on remotely received instructions. The monitoring system may also have a self-locating device, such as a GPS receiver, having an output indicative of the location of the monitoring system. In that case, character-

istics of the measured input and output may depend upon the location of the monitoring system.

[0679] The monitoring system described above may be included within a distributed network of utilities providing sources of purified water. The distributed network has devices for generating water using input sensors for measuring inputs to respective generators, output sensor for measuring consumption of output from respective generators, and a telemetry transmitter for transmitting input and output parameters of a specified generator. Finally, the distributed network may have a remote processor for receiving input and output parameters from a plurality of utility generators.

[0680] Referring now to FIG. 42, this figure depicts monitoring generation device 4202. Generation device 4202 may be a water vapor distillation apparatus as disclosed herein. Generation device 4202 may typically be characterized by a set of parameters that describe its current operating status and conditions. Such parameters may include, without limitation, its temperature, its input or output flux, etc., and may be subject to monitoring by means of sensors, as described in detail below.

[0681] Still referring to FIG. 42, source water enters the generation device 4202 at inlet 4204 and leaves the generation device at outlet 4206. The amount of source water 4208 entering generation device 4202 and the amount of purified water 4210 leaving generation device 4202 may be monitored through the use of one or more of a variety of sensors commonly used to determine flow rate, such as sensors for determining them temperature and pressure or a rotometer, located at inlet sensor module 4212 and/or at outlet sensor module 4214, either on a per event or cumulative basis. Additionally, the proper functioning of the generation device 4202 may be determined by measuring the turbidity, conductivity, and/or temperature at the outlet sensor module 4214 and/or the inlet sensor module 4212. Other parameters, such as system usage time or power consumption, either per event or cumulatively, may also be determined. A sensor may be coupled to an alarm or shut off switch that may be triggered when the sensor detects a value outside a pre-programmed range.

[0682] When the location of the system is known, either through direct input of the system location or by the use of a GPS location detector, additional water quality tests may be run based on location, including checks for known local water contaminants, utilizing a variety of detectors, such as antibody chip detectors or cell-based detectors. The water quality sensors may detect an amount of contaminants in water. The sensors may be programmed to sound an alarm if the water quality value rises above a pre-programmed water quality value. The water quality value is the measured amount of contaminants in the water. Alternatively, a shut off switch may turn off the generation device if the water quality value rises about a pre-programmed water quality value.

[0683] Further, scale build-up in the generation device 4202, if any, may be determined by a variety of methods, including monitoring the heat transfer properties of the system or measuring the flow impedance. A variety of other sensors may be used to monitor a variety of other system parameters.

[0684] Still referring to FIG. 42, the sensors described above may be used to monitor and/or record the various parameters described above onboard the generation device 4202, or in an alternative embodiment the generation device 4202 may be equipped with a communication system 4214, such as a cellular communication system. The communica-

tion system **4214** could be an internal system used solely for communication between the generation device **4202** and the monitoring station **4216**. Alternatively, the communication system **4214** could be a cellular communication system that includes a cellular telephone for general communication through a cellular satellite system **4218**. The communication system **4214** may also employ wireless technology such as the Bluetooth open specification. The communication system **4214** may additionally include a GPS (Global Positioning System) locator.

[0685] Still referring to FIG. 42, the communication system **4214** enables a variety of improvements to the generation device **4202**, by enabling communication with a monitoring station **4216**. For example, the monitoring station **4216** may monitor the location of the generation device **4202** to ensure that use in an intended location by an intended user. Additionally, the monitoring station **4216** may monitor the amount of water and/or electricity produced, which may allow the calculation of usage charges. Additionally, the determination of the amount of water and/or electricity produced during a certain period or the cumulative hours of usage during a certain period, allows for the calculation of a preventative maintenance schedule. If it is determined that a maintenance call is required, either by the calculation of usage or by the output of any of the sensors used to determine water quality, the monitoring station **4216** may arrange for a maintenance visit. In the case that a GPS (Global Positioning System) locator is in use, monitoring station **4216** may determine the precise location of the generation device **4202** to better facilitate a maintenance visit. The monitoring station **4216** may also determine which water quality or other tests are most appropriate for the present location of the generation device **4202**. The communication system **4214** may also be used to turn the generation device **4202** on or off, to pre-heat the device prior to use, or to deactivate the system in the event the system is relocated without advance warning, such as in the event of theft.

[0686] Now referring to FIG. 43, the use of the monitoring and communication system described above facilitates the use of a variety of utility distribution systems. An organization **43**, such as a Government agency, non-governmental agency (NGO), or privately funded relief organization, a corporation, or a combination of these, could provide distributed utilities, such as safe drinking water or electricity, to a geographical or political area, such as an entire country. The organization **43** may then establish local distributors **44A**, **44B**, and **44C**. These local distributors could preferably be a monitoring station **4216** (See FIG. 42) previously described. In one possible arrangement, organization **43** could provide some number of generation devices **4202** (See FIG. 42) to the local distributor **44**, etc. In another possible arrangement, the organization **43** could sell, loan, or make other financial arrangements for the distribution of the generation devices **4202** (See FIG. 42). The local distributor **44**, etc. could then either give these generation devices to operators **45**, etc., or provide the generation devices **4202** (See FIG. 42) to the operators through some type of financial arrangement, such as a sale or micro-loan.

[0687] Still referring to FIG. 43, the operator **45** could then provide distributed utilities to a village center, school, hospital, or other group at or near the point of water access. In one exemplary embodiment, when the generation device **4202** (See FIG. 42) is provided to the operator **45** by means of a micro-loan, the operator **45** could charge the end users on a

per-unit bases, such as per watt hour in the case of electricity or per liter in the case of purified water. Either the local distributor **44** or the organization **43** may monitor usage and other parameters using one of the communication systems described above. The distributor **44** or the organization **43** could then recoup some of the cost of the generation device **45** (See FIG. 42) or effect repayment of the micro-loan by charging the operator **4312** for some portion of the per-unit charges, such as 50%. The communication systems described additionally may be used to deactivate the generation device **4202** (See FIG. 42) if the generation device is relocated outside of a pre-set area or if payments are not made in a timely manner. This type of a distribution system may allow the distribution of needed utilities across a significant area quickly, while then allowing for at least the partial recoupment of funds, which, for example, could then be used to develop a similar system in another area.

[0688] Now referring to FIG. 44, this figure illustrates a conceptual flow diagram of one possible way to incorporate an alternate embodiment of the water vapor distillation apparatus into a system. In an embodiment of this type, fluid flows through the system from an intake **4404** into an exchanger **4406** wherein exchanger **4406** receives heat from at least one of a plurality of sources including a condenser **4402**, a head **4408**, and exhaust (not shown) from a power source such as an internal or external combustion engine. Fluid continues flowing past heat exchanger **4406** into a sump **4410** and into a core **4412** in thermal contact with condenser **4402**. In the core **4412**, the fluid is partially vaporized. From core **4412**, the vapor path proceeds into head **4408** in communication with a compressor **4414**, and from there into condenser **4402**. After the vapor has condensed, fluid proceeds from condenser **4402** through heat exchanger **4406**, and finally into an exhaust region **4416** and then out as final distilled product.

[0689] Referring to FIGS. 44 and 44A, a power source **4418** may be used to power the overall system. Power source **4418** may be coupled to a motor (not shown) that is used to drive compressor **4414**, particularly when compressor **4414** is a steam pump, such as a liquid ring pump or a regenerative blower. The power source **4418** may also be used to provide electrical energy to the other elements of the apparatus shown in FIG. 44. Power source **4418** may be, for example, an electrical outlet, a standard internal combustion (IC) generator or an external combustion generator. In one exemplary embodiment, the power source is a Stirling cycle engine. An IC generator and an external combustion generator advantageously produce both power and thermal energy as shown in FIG. 44A, where engine **4420** produces both mechanical and thermal energy. Engine **4420** may be either an internal combustion engine or an external combustion engine. A generator **4422**, such as a permanent magnet brushless motor, is coupled to a crankshaft of the engine **4420** and converts the mechanical energy produced by the engine **4420** to electrical energy, such as power **4424**. Engine **4420** also produces exhaust gases **4426** and heat **4428**. The thermal energy produced by the engine **4420** in the form of exhaust gas **4426** and heat **4428** may be advantageously used to provide heat to the system.

[0690] Referring to FIG. 44, heat from a power source **4418** may be recaptured by channeling the exhaust into the insulated cavity that surrounds the apparatus, which may lie between external housing and the individual apparatus components. In one embodiment, exhaust may blow across a finned heat exchanger that heats source fluid prior to entering

the evaporator/condenser **4402**. In other embodiments, the source fluid flows past a tube-in-tube heat exchanger as described above with reference to the exemplary embodiment.

[0691] Referring now to FIG. **528A**, one embodiment of the system is shown. The system includes two basic functional components that may be combined within a single integral unit or may be capable of separate operation and coupled as described herein for the purpose of local water purification. FIG. **528A** depicts an of the system in which a power unit **528010** is coupled electrically, via cable **528014**, to provide electrical power to a water vapor distillation apparatus **528012**, with exhaust gas from the power unit **528010** coupled to convey heat to the water distillation unit **528012** via an exhaust duct **528016**.

[0692] In the exemplary embodiment, the power unit **528010** is a Stirling cycle engine. The Stirling cycle engine may be any of the embodiments described herein. Thermal cycle engines are limited, by second law of thermodynamics, to a fractional efficiency, i.e., a Carnot efficiency of $(TH - TC)/TH$, where TH and TC are the temperatures of the available heat source and ambient thermal background, respectively. During the compression phase of a heat engine cycle, heat must be exhausted from the system in a manner not entirely reversible, thus there will always be a surfeit of exhaust heat. More significantly, moreover, not all the heat provided during the expansion phase of the heat engine cycle is coupled into the working fluid. Here, too, exhaust heat is generated that may be used advantageously for other purposes. The total heat thermodynamically available (i.e., in gas hotter than the ambient environment) in the burner exhaust is typically on the order of 10% of the total input power. For a power unit delivering on the order of a kilowatt of electrical power, as much as 700 W of heat may be available in an exhaust stream of gas at temperatures in the vicinity of 200° C. In accordance with embodiments of the present apparatus, system and methods, the exhaust heat, as well as the electrical power generated by an engine-powered generator, are used in the purification of water for human consumption, thereby advantageously providing an integrated system to which only raw water and a fuel need be provided.

[0693] Moreover, external combustion engines, such as Stirling cycle engines, are capable of providing high thermal efficiency and low emission of pollutants, when such methods are employed as efficient pumping of oxidant (typically, air, and, referred to herein and in any appended claims, without limitation, as “air”) through the burner to provide combustion, and the recovery of hot exhaust leaving the heater head. In many applications, air is pre-heated, prior to combustion, nearly to the temperature of the heater head, so as to achieve the stated objectives of thermal efficiency. However, the high temperature of preheated air, desirable for achieving high thermal efficiency, complicates achieving low-emission goals by making it difficult to premix the fuel and air and by requiring large amounts of excess air in order to limit the flame temperature. Technology directed toward overcoming these difficulties in order to achieve efficient and low-emission operation of thermal engines is described, for example, in U.S. Pat. No. 6,062,023 (Kerwin, et al.) issued May 16, 2000, and incorporated herein by reference.

[0694] External combustion engines are, additionally, conducive to the use of a wide variety of fuels, including those most available under particular local circumstances; however the teachings of the present description are not limited to such

engines, and internal combustion engines are also within the scope of the current disclosure. Internal combustion engines, however, impose difficulties due to the typically polluted nature of the exhausted gases, and external combustion engines are preferably employed.

[0695] Still referring to FIG. **528A**, an embodiment of a power unit **528010** is shown schematically in FIG. **528B**. Power unit **528010** includes an external combustion engine **528101** coupled to a generator **528102**. In an exemplary embodiment, the external combustion engine **528101** is a Stirling cycle engine. The outputs of the Stirling cycle engine **528101** during operation include both mechanical energy and residual heat energy. Heat produced in the combustion of a fuel in a burner **528104** is applied as an input to the Stirling cycle engine **528101**, and partially converted to mechanical energy. The unconverted heat or thermal energy accounts for approximately 65 to 85% of the energy released in the burner **528104**. The ranges given herein are approximations and the ranges may vary depending on the embodiment of water vapor distillation apparatus used in the system and the embodiment of the Stirling engine (or other generator) used in the system.

[0696] This heat is available to provide heating to the local environment around the power unit **528110** in two forms: a smaller flow of exhaust gas from the burner **528104** and a much larger flow of heat rejected at the cooler **528103** of the Stirling engine. Power unit **528110** may also be referred to as an auxiliary power unit (APU). The exhaust gases are relatively hot, typically 100 to 300° C., and represent 10 to 20% of the thermal energy produced by the Stirling engine **528101**. The cooler rejects 80 to 90% of the thermal energy at 10 to 20° C. above the ambient temperature. The heat is rejected to either a flow of water or, more typically, to the air via a radiator **528107**. Stirling cycle engine **528101** is preferably of a size such that power unit **528010** is transportable.

[0697] As shown in FIG. **528B**, Stirling engine **528101** is powered directly by a heat source such as burner **528104**. Burner **528104** combusts a fuel to produce hot exhaust gases which are used to drive the Stirling engine **528101**. A burner control unit **528109** is coupled to the burner **528104** and a fuel canister **528110**. Burner control unit **528109** delivers a fuel from the fuel canister **528110** to the burner **528104**. The burner controller **528109** also delivers a measured amount of air to the burner **528104** to advantageously ensure substantially complete combustion. The fuel combusted by burner **528104** is preferably a clean burning and commercially available fuel such as propane. A clean burning fuel is a fuel that does not contain large amounts of contaminants, the most important being sulfur. Natural gas, ethane, propane, butane, ethanol, methanol and liquefied petroleum gas (“LPG”) are all clean burning fuels when the contaminants are limited to a few percent. One example of a commercially available propane fuel is HD-5, an industry grade defined by the Society of Automotive Engineers and available from Bernzomatic. In accordance with an embodiment of the system, and as discussed in more detail below, the Stirling engine **528101** and burner **528104** provide substantially complete combustion in order to provide high thermal efficiency as well as low emissions. The characteristics of high efficiency and low emissions may advantageously allow use of power unit **528010** indoors.

[0698] Generator **528102** is coupled to a crankshaft (not shown) of Stirling engine **528101**. It should be understood to one of ordinary skill in the art that the term generator encom-

passes the class of electric machines such as generators wherein mechanical energy is converted to electrical energy or motors wherein electrical energy is converted to mechanical energy. The generator **528102** is preferably a permanent magnet brushless motor. A rechargeable battery **528113** provides starting power for the power unit **528010** as well as direct current ("DC") power to a DC power output **528112**. In a further embodiment, APU **528010** also advantageously provides alternating current ("AC") power to an AC power output **528114**. An inverter **528116** is coupled to the battery **528113** in order to convert the DC power produced by battery **528113** to AC power. In the embodiment shown in FIG. **528B**, the battery **528113**, inverter **528116** and AC power output **528114** are disposed within an enclosure **528120**.

[**0699**] Utilization of the exhaust gas generated in the operation of power unit **528010** is now described with reference to the schematic depiction of an embodiment of the system shown in FIG. **528C**. Burner exhaust is directed through a heat conduit **528016** into enclosure **528504** of the water vapor distillation apparatus unit designated generally by numeral **528012**. Heat conduit **528016** is preferably a hose that may be plastic or corrugated metal surrounded by insulation, however all means of conveying exhaust heat from power unit **528010** to water purification unit **528012** are within the scope of the system. The exhaust gas, designated by arrow **528502**, blows across a heat exchanger **528506** (in the exemplary embodiment, a hose-in-hose heat exchanger is used, in other embodiments, a finned heat exchanger is used), thereby heating the source water stream **528508** as it travels to the water vapor distillation (which is also referred to herein as a "still") evaporator **528510**. The hot gas **528512** that fills the volume surrounded by insulated enclosure **528504** essentially removes all thermal loss from the still system since the gas temperature within the insulated cavity is hotter than surface **528514** of the still itself. Thus, there is substantially no heat flow from the still to the ambient environment, and losses on the order of 75 W for a still of 10 gallon/hour capacity are thereby recovered. A microswitch **528518** senses the connection of hose **528016** coupling hot exhaust to purification unit **528012** so that operation of the unit may account for the influx of hot gas.

[**0700**] In accordance with alternate embodiments adding heat to exhaust stream **528502** is within the scope of the system, whether through addition of a post-burner (not shown) or using electrical power for ohmic heating.

[**0701**] During initial startup of the system, power unit **528010** is activated, providing both electrical power and hot exhaust. Warm-up of the still **528012** is significantly accelerated since the heat exchanger **528506** is initially below the dew point of the moisture content of the exhaust, since the exhaust contains water as a primary combustion product. The heat of vaporization of this water content is available to heat source water as the water condenses on the fins of the heat exchanger. The heat of vaporization supplements heating of the heat exchanger by convection of hot gas within the still cavity. For example, in the fin heat exchanger embodiment, heating of the fins by convection continues even after the fins reach the dew point of the exhaust.

[**0702**] In accordance with other embodiments of the system, power unit **528010** and still **528012** may be further integrated by streaming water from the still through the power unit for cooling purposes. The use of source water for cooling presents problems due to the untreated nature of the water. Whereas using the product water requires an added complex-

ity of the system to allow for cooling of the power unit before the still has warmed up to full operating conditions.

[**0703**] Referring again to FIG. **44**, other embodiments may include the use of additives in solid form, wherein such additives could be embedded in a time-release matrix inserted into the flow-through channel of intake **4404**. In one particular embodiment, replacement additive would need to be inserted periodically by the user. In yet another embodiment, a powder form of an additive could be added in a batch system wherein the powder is added, for example in tablet form, to an external reservoir containing water to be purified wherein the additive is uniformly mixed, similar to the batch system for adding liquid additives described above.

[**0704**] Still referring to FIG. **44**, pre-treatment of the source water may occur prior to or within intake **4404**. Pre-treatment operations may include, but is not limited to gross-filtering; treatment with chemical additives such as polyphosphates, polyacetates, organic acids, or polyaspartates; and electrochemical treatment such as an oscillating magnetic field or an electrical current; degassing; and UV treatment. Additives may be added in liquid form to the incoming liquid stream using a continuous pumping mechanism such as a roller pump or pulsatile pump, including a standard diaphragm pump or piezoelectric diaphragm pump. Alternatively, the additives may be added by a semi-continuous mechanism using, for example, a syringe pump, which would require a re-load cycle, or a batch pumping system, wherein a small volume of the additive would be pumped into a holding volume or reservoir external to the system that uniformly mixes the additive with the liquid before the liquid flows into the system. It is also envisioned that the user could simply drop a prescribed volume of the additive into, for example, a bucket containing the liquid to be purified. Liquid additive may be loaded as either a lifetime quantity (i.e., no consumables for the life of the machine), or as a disposable amount requiring re-loading after consumption.

[**0705**] Still referring to FIG. **44**, similarly post-treatment of the product water may occur preferably within an external output region (not shown). Post-treatment operations may include, but is not limit to taste additives such as sugar-based additives for sweetening, acids for tartness, and minerals. Other additives, including nutrients, vitamins, stabilized proteins such as creatinine, and fats, and sugars may also be added. Such additives may be added either in liquid or solid form, whether as a time-release tablet through which the output liquid flows or a powder added to an external reservoir such as through a batch system. Alternatively, the additive may be added to the output liquid via an internal coating of a separate collection reservoir or container, for example, by leaching or dissolution on contact. In such embodiments, the ability to detect purified liquid with and without the additive may be preferred. Detection systems in accordance with various embodiments include pH analysis, conductivity and hardness analysis, or other standard electrical-based assays. Such detection systems allow for replacement of additives, as needed, by triggering a signal mechanism when the additive level/quantity is below a pre-set level, or is undetectable.

[**0706**] In another embodiment, liquid characteristics, such as for example water hardness, is monitored in the output and may be coupled with an indicator mechanism which signals that it is preferable to add appropriate additives.

[**0707**] In yet another embodiment, ozone is systemically generated using, for example, electric current or discharge methods, and added to the output product for improved taste.

Alternatively, air may be pumped through a HEPA filter bubbling through the product water to improve palatability of the water.

[0708] Similarly, it is envisioned that other embodiments may include means for detecting nucleic acids, antigens and bio-organisms such as bacteria. Examples of such detection means include nanoscale chemistry and biochemistry micro-arrays known in the field and currently commercially available. Such arrays may also be used to monitor the presence and/or absence of nutrients and other additives in the purified product, as discussed above.

[0709] In another embodiment, UV treatment may be used post-purification, for example in a storage barrel or other container, to aid in maintenance of the purified product.

[0710] While the principles of the invention have been described herein, it is to be understood by those skilled in the art that this description is made only by way of example and not as a limitation as to the scope of the invention. Other embodiments are contemplated within the scope of the present invention in addition to the exemplary embodiments shown and described herein. Modifications and substitutions by one of ordinary skill in the art are considered to be within the scope of the present invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A fluid vapor distillation apparatus comprising:

a source fluid input;

an evaporator condenser apparatus comprising:

a substantially cylindrical housing; and

a plurality of tubes in said housing,

whereby said source fluid input is fluidly connected to said evaporator condenser and said evaporator condenser transforms source fluid into steam and transforms compressed steam into product fluid;

a heat exchanger fluidly connected to said source fluid input and a product fluid output, said heat exchanger comprising:

an outer tube; and

at least one inner tube; and

a regenerative blower fluidly connected to said evaporator condenser, whereby said regenerative blower compresses steam, and whereby the compressed steam flows to the evaporative condenser where compressed steam is transformed into product fluid.

2. The apparatus of claim **1** wherein the heat exchanger is disposed about said housing of said evaporator condenser.

3. The apparatus of claim **1** wherein the heat exchanger further comprising wherein said outer tube is a source fluid flow path and said at least one inner tube is a product fluid flow path.

4. The apparatus of claim **3** wherein said heat exchanger further comprising at least three inner tubes.

5. The apparatus of claim **4** wherein said at least three inner tubes are twisted to form a substantially helical shape.

6. The apparatus of claim **5** wherein said heat exchanger further comprising two ends, and at each end a connector is attached, whereby said connectors form a connection to the evaporator condenser.

7. The apparatus of claim **1** wherein said evaporator condenser tubes further comprising packing inside the tubes.

8. The apparatus of claim **7** wherein said packing is a rod.

9. The apparatus of claim **1** wherein said evaporator condenser further comprising a steam chest fluidly connected to said plurality of tubes.

10. The apparatus of claim **1** wherein said regenerative blower further comprising an impeller assembly driven by a magnetic drive coupling.

11. A water vapor distillation system comprising:

a water vapor distillation apparatus comprising:

a source fluid input;

an evaporator condenser apparatus comprising:

a substantially cylindrical housing; and

a plurality of tubes in said housing,

whereby said source fluid input is fluidly connected to said evaporator condenser and said evaporator condenser transforms source fluid into steam and transforms compressed steam into product fluid;

a heat exchanger fluidly connected to said source fluid input and a product fluid output, said heat exchanger comprising:

an outer tube; and

at least one inner tube; and

a regenerative blower fluidly connected to said evaporator condenser, whereby said regenerative blower compresses steam, and whereby the compressed steam flows to the evaporative condenser where compressed steam is transformed into product fluid;

a Stirling engine electrically connected to said water vapor distillation apparatus, wherein said Stirling engine at least partially powers said water vapor distillation apparatus.

12. The water vapor distillation system of claim **11** wherein said Stirling engine comprising:

at least one rocking drive mechanism comprising:

a rocking beam having a rocker pivot;

at least one cylinder;

at least one piston, the piston housed within a respective cylinder whereby the piston is capable of substantially linearly reciprocating within the respective cylinder; and

at least one coupling assembly having a proximal end and a distal end, the proximal end being connected to the piston and the distal end being connected to the rocking beam by an end pivot, whereby linear motion of the piston is converted to rotary motion of the rocking beam;

a crankcase housing the rocking beam and housing a first portion of the coupling assembly;

a crankshaft coupled to the rocking beam by way of a connecting rod, whereby the rotary motion of the rocking beam is transferred to the crankshaft;

a working space housing the at least one cylinder, the at least one piston and a second portion of the coupling assembly; and

a seal for sealing the workspace from the crankcase.

13. The water vapor distillation system of claim **12** wherein the seal is a rolling diaphragm.

14. The water vapor distillation system of claim **12** wherein the coupling assembly further comprising:

a piston rod; and

a link rod, the piston rod and link rod coupled together by a coupling means.

15. The water vapor distillation system of claim **12** further comprising a lubricating fluid pump in the crankcase.

16. The water vapor distillation system of claim **12** wherein the heat exchanger is disposed about the housing of the evaporator condenser.

17. The water vapor distillation system of claim **12** wherein the heat exchanger further comprising wherein the outer tube is a source fluid flow path and the at least one inner tube is a product fluid flow path.

18. The water vapor distillation system of claim **17** wherein the heat exchanger further comprising at least three inner tubes.

19. The water vapor distillation system of claim **12** wherein the evaporator condenser further comprising a steam chest fluidly connected to the plurality of tubes.

20. The water vapor distillation system of claim **12** wherein the regenerative blower further comprising an impeller assembly driven by a magnetic drive coupling.

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